

Making and Relational Creativity:
An exploration of relationships that arise through creative
practices in informal making spaces

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Doctor of Education

Lindsey Helen Bennett 2019

Making and Relational Creativity: An exploration of relationships that arise through creative practices in informal making spaces

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or any other Higher Educational institution.

Lindsey Helen Bennett

Signed Dated

For every child
who needs to be seen and heard

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the connections between making and relational creativity, exploring relationships that arise through creative practices in informal making spaces. As the researcher, my background is that of both artist and educator, and I combine both roles to work alongside students within the space. The aims of the study are to explore the impact such spaces have on teachers professional relationships with students together with the impact on student relationships. In addition, the research also aims to address the implications of informal making spaces for the school curriculum in England. The research is centred around the A/R/Tography Collective, a making space created to allow students the opportunity to meet and create after school outside of lesson time. The research builds on the democratic learning practices of Room 13 and Reggio Emilia models of learning. Using a qualitative approach within a narrative paradigm in the form of case study, I work alongside students within the field. By employing an immersive approach where field notes were written up retrospectively and reflected upon, I have been able to offer a holistic and balanced account of both my own and participant experiences, exposing the complexities and problematic nature of creative practices emerging outside of the curriculum framework. My findings reveal that by deconstructing traditional pedagogical frameworks, the lived experiences of students are revealed through the process of making, providing a unique insight into their lives. The findings suggest that the current art and design curriculum in England is not meeting the needs of students, and recommends the value of making spaces that exist outside of the curriculum framework to enhance learner experience. The research recommends that by allowing students freedom of expression within curriculum time, relationships between students and teacher are developed and strengthened. This in turn positively impacts on student performance within curriculum time. The research recommends the need for educators to inhabit a more holistic role, to tailor their pedagogy to meet the individual, ever changing needs of students.

Summary of Portfolio The following essays were successfully submitted as component parts of the doctoral degree:

Research methodologies for professional enquiry: Comprising of two components, the first of which consisted of a review of the philosophy and theory underpinning positivist and interpretative paradigms in relation to a small-scale research project. I critically analyse the influence of both positivist and interpretative paradigms for the purpose of research and conclude by recommending I use a reflexive and interpretative lens through which to analyse the emerging data, "...to understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, Lawren & Morrison, 2007). The second component acknowledged my own interest in the subject of arts education and I conducted an investigation into the impact of a digital app called 123D Sculpture to effectively engage boys in the art classroom. I employed the methodology of a qualitative case study and a theoretical proposal in support of new technologies within the art classroom was given. The essay concluded by acknowledging the need for a marriage of between physical and digital media in order that art education may progress to meet the needs of learners in the Twenty First Century.

Social theory and education: This essay comprised of two components, which I chose to write as one document with no distinction being made between them. Component one comprised of choosing the work of a theorist through which to investigate social theory. By reflecting on my own art practice, I was drawn to the theories of Jerome Bruner (1976) in relation to play. Component two was an autoethnographic investigation into application of the theories of Bruner to further understand educational practice. The methodology employed was a qualitative semi-structured interview asking the participants to reflect on their time on a G.C.S.E art and design course in England to establish whether play had occurred during the process of making. My essay concluded by asserting that although play had occurred on some level it was as a by-product of the creative process due to curriculum constraints inhibiting the classroom environment.

Creativity in practice: This module consisted of two components. Component one was the submission of a practice-based research project comprising of an interactive image game, designed to be played by students and myself. "The Photo Game", was devised for multiple

players roughly based on the concept of the game, ping-pong. A photographic image was submitted to an online digital folder by myself and students were then invited to respond to the image submitted and subsequent images submitted thus engaging in visual dialogue. The results of the Photo Game were published in book form and submitted for component one. The second component reflected on theories of Bruner (1976) and Wenger (2006), exploring the importance of communities of practice within art and facilitating play and creativity within the classroom. The essay continued by offering a critical account of my own practice based research and demonstrated how an environment free from curriculum constraints was conducive to creativity.

Cultural practices: This module comprised of a small-scale case study into how students visually perceive the culture of the internet. I employed an ethnographic methodology using a reflexive paradigm to examine the links between culture, identity and community. Arts-based research methods were used through which to elicit data by asking participants to draw their vision of the internet. The research explored the theories of Bhahba (1994) and Bauman (2001; 2004) concerning culture, community and identity. The essay concluded by highlighting the importance of including digital technologies within art education to meet the ever-changing needs of students.

Institutions, discontinuities and systems of knowledge: This essay explored the mechanisms of power and the socio-structure of a secondary school setting. I explored how neo-liberalism had permeated the culture of school through the culture of Ofsted and accountability, leading to the de-professionalisation of educators. I applied the theories of Foucault (1977), to explore methods of physical and metaphorical surveillance concluding with an analysis of the conflict between participant-led models of learning and the institution of schools. To highlight the discontinuity, I retrospectively analysed a project undertaken at masters level, where students were invited to produce a piece of self-generated art with no measurable outcome. The essay concluded by hypothesising that the space for self-generated art within the art curriculum is limited, due to the problematic nature of measuring outcomes for assessment purposes within the school environment.

Thesis in context: This module required me to design my thesis research proposal, constructing a research question and conducting a literature review of the theoretical landscape. I explored the conceptual framework in which my research would be situated exploring methodologies pertinent to the study and methods of data collection. Ethics were explored and sent for approval to the University Committee. The essay concluded with a reflexive appraisal of the research design process.

Introduction

“Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world” (Palmer as cited in hooks, 2003,p.43).

Palmer’s understanding of education is an ideal I hold central to my pedagogy. However, as an art and design educator working in a busy secondary school environment, I did not feel that the reality of art education I was offering students reflected the vision held by Palmer. The idea for this thesis arose through the dissatisfaction I felt with my own pedagogy through teaching the national art and design curriculum in England. I commenced my teaching career in 2012, which proved to be a challenging time for arts education. The English Baccalaureate had been introduced in 2010 and, during the six years I had been teaching, had become the school’s qualification of choice due to the fact that schools are measured on the number of students taking core subjects at GCSE and student progress in these subjects (Gov.UK 2018). The introduction of the Ebacc has had a detrimental effect on pupil numbers opting to take Art and Design at GCSE level within the school due to the fact that it is not one of the core subjects (Adams, 2017).

This was reflected in the number of hours timetabled for the subject, which was given on average an hour and a half less of curriculum time each week than Maths, Science and English. In response to the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments’ educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016), the culture of the department had become competitive and target driven as Art and Design fought for its place within curriculum time. This target driven culture had impacted on my pedagogy as the need to measure pupil progress and produce results diminished creativity within the subject.

Reflecting on my pedagogy, I felt that I had become the antithesis of what an artist teacher should be, a dictator rather than a facilitator. As an artist teacher I had become conditioned to producing units of work with prescribed outcomes. This was indicative of me relinquishing my own sense of individual and professional agency, "...in favour of an externally managed and nationally defined structure of professional capability" (Bamber, 2015, p.5). There was a clear tension within my practice between freedom of expression and adhering to the target driven culture of the school.

As an art practitioner, my own practice is heavily involved in autobiographical and issue based art, and I have a keen interest in exploring ideas through the process of making. However, I was not affording students the opportunity to experiment with this kind of contemporary art practice. I began to consider how critical pedagogy could be incorporated into my own teaching practice, to allow students the space to question key issues relevant to themselves as individuals and the wider picture of society. Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach which attempts to challenge and question established methods of working. Craft, (2001) describes such practices as, "...the kind of creativity which guides choices and route-finding in everyday life...being imaginative, going beyond the obvious, being aware of one's own unconventionality, being original in some way.

It is not necessarily linked with a product outcome" (p.15).



Figure 1 "He, Myself and Me" (2014)

This image was exhibited as part of the Moving Minds Exhibition at the Oriel Sycharth Gallery, Wrexham, Wales. Through digitally and physically manipulating images, I blur the boundaries between fact and fiction exploring personal narratives. In the foreground there is an image of my estranged father and me taken when I was two years old. My "self" looks on in the background.

During a conversation with one of my students, it was highlighted that all the subject-specific after school clubs available for older students were designed to reinforce subject knowledge in readiness for exams. The question was asked, “Why can’t we have a place to chill and make art?” The directness of the question momentarily took me by surprise cutting through my preoccupation with student performance and targets so akin to my pedagogy. Why indeed could students not have such a place to make art? Perhaps more importantly why was I as an artist teacher neglecting to provide such a space? When I researched extra curricula topics offered to the students outside of school, sport was the only non-subject specific after school activity offered to students after the age of fourteen years. I reflected on the number of students who had brought in much treasured sketchbooks from home for me to see, filled with drawings and sketches fresh from their imagination or images from popular culture. This self-generated art did not have the time or a place to flourish within the confines of the curriculum.

Through the reading I had undertaken for my masters in education, I had been introduced to the democratic learning practices of Room 13. This is an arts-based educational model that was established in a Scottish primary school in the early 1990’s (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005). Learners are given a designated drop-in-space within the school where they are able to make art engaged in contemporary art practices with an artist-in-residence (Room 13). Pupil autonomy and management is the dominant model for such practices and it had become so successful it had developed both nationally and internationally (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005). Although established and flourishing on a global scale, in my experience as an art educator, this model was not transferring into mainstream secondary education and was unfamiliar to educators outside of the academic community. I was keen to apply the fundamental concepts of pupil

autonomy and democratic learning practices to bridge the gap between curriculum and personal art within the school environment.

Therefore I created the A/R/Tography Collective (Irwin, 2013). *A/R/Tography* is defined as a form of, "...practice-based research within the arts and education" (Irwin et al., 2013 p.199). The term has been used to describe the professional practices of educators, artists and researchers working together to make, create and provide new ways of understanding (Irwin, et al., 2013). It occurred to me that, if professionals were working together to create new ways of understanding, then surely it should be fitting that professionals should work alongside students to explore new ways of understanding. Irwin (2004) refers to a/r/tography as a research methodology that occurs in the liminal in-between. The term a/r/tography resonated and the definition of blurred genres seemed fitting for a project that aimed to blur the boundaries between curriculum and self-generated art. In order to differentiate between the a/r/tographic practices of Irwin et. al (2013) and the participants, I decided to use block capitals for the term A/R/Tography within the project and refer to the participants as A/R/Tographers. My rationale for using capitals was to use a term that the participants would be able to identify with but to also to highlight their importance as both fellow artists and researchers within the study.

Therefore the A/R/Tography space would become a place where key stage four students would have the opportunity to meet and create art after school for one hour per week, outside of the curriculum framework. The term *key stage four*, refers to students who have commenced their two years of school education incorporating their examinations. The A/R/Tography space would occur within a school setting but would be separate from the culture of school. Students would have the opportunity to explore process-based art without the concern of how quantifiable the art was in terms of academic value.

Throughout this thesis, the term *A/R/Tographers* will be used to describe the students participating in the study, who inhabited the A/R/Tography space. The research builds on the democratic learning practices of Room 13 (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005) and Reggio Emilia models of learning (Dahlberg, Ross & Pence, 1999; Rinaldi, 2005; Vecchi, 2010). Over the course of the study I would get to know the A/R/Tographers well, and the research uses qualitative case studies to tell the stories that were generated, both theirs and mine. According to Sikes, (2012), “writing lives is always an auto/biographical process and acknowledging this is ... the first task that ethical researchers must address” (p.12).

As both an educator and artist, I am accustomed to reflecting on my professional practice and art practice. Through the process of reflection, I consider events which have unfolded through both my teaching and my actions in order that I may improve the same. I considered reflexivity to be the most autonomous research methodology to employ for this qualitative study. I propose that rather than detract from the data, reflexivity has added a richness and depth to the work, allowing the A/R/Tographers’ experiences and insights to be revealed. I therefore employed reflexivity as a methodological tool with which to tell the A/R/Tographers stories (Bamber, 2015). and respond to and meet the needs of each individuals practice.

When collecting data through the use of field notes, I employed a reflexive lens through which to analyse data and with which to consider both my personal and professional identity. Using a qualitative approach within a narrative paradigm in the form of case study, I was able to ensure the A/R/Tographers’ voices were heard. Commenting on the ethical implications of working with young people, Grover (2004) expresses the concern that authentic social research should give power and voice to child research participants providing insights into their subjective world. The purpose of such research, “...allows the children

to a degree to be ‘subject’ or collaborator in the research process rather than simply study ‘object’” (p.4). Placing the A/R/Tographers at the heart of the study has been paramount and carefully considered when choosing the methodologies and methods.

The school within which I have undertaken my research project is a mixed secondary community school with a larger than average number of pupils on roll. The school draws students from beyond its catchment area and is fully subscribed. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also lower than that usually seen, and the majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average (Ofsted Report 2015). In the context of the county, the school is the largest in the local area and from experience the students who attend are from a wide ranging social demographic.

The research commences by focusing on the first sessions of the A/R/Tography Collective, exploring the relationships between A/R/Tographers and educator. This is followed by a comprehensive account of the A/R/Tographers’ experiences of making and relational creativity and moves to explore the A/R/Tographers’ experiences of a trip participating in Tate Exchange in Liverpool; concluding with an examination of both A/R/Tographers’ and my response to the conclusion of the A/R/Tography research project. I believe it provides a reflective and authentic understanding of the nature of providing democratic making spaces within a secondary school setting. This doctoral research project investigates; ‘Making and relational creativity – an exploration of relationships that arise through creative practices in informal making spaces.’

The aims of this study are addressed in the following research questions:

- What impact do informal making spaces have on teachers' professional relationships with students?
- What impact do informal making spaces have on student relationships?
- What are the implications of informal making spaces for the school curriculum in England?

By specifically focusing on the above, I was able to connect both Palmer's (as cited in hooks, 2003) and my own vision of what education might look like, free from national curriculum constraints, and examine the relationships between the A/R/Tographers and myself as an educator. The aims of the study are important to me as I felt that within the classroom, I inhabited the role of dictator rather than facilitator, imposing criterion and outcomes (Ranciere 2010b). The aims of this study are particularly pertinent standing contrary to the current political climate, where neoliberal economics have resulted in education being viewed as competitive, performative and individualistic (Adams, 2018 p.29). It was important to me as both an educator and artist that I would be able to work alongside students free from curriculum constraints. Although previous studies have investigated student engagement with contemporary art practices (Gibb, 2012), I was keen to explore the impact informal makings spaces would have on relationships, something not measurable in terms of outcome and the binary opposite to the current educational climate both internationally and globally (Adams & Owens, 2016; Adams, 2018).

Having introduced my study and its purpose, the first chapter will examine the methodological approach employed and the ethical considerations required in its application. Principally my research is a case study employing a variety of qualitative research methods;

narrative, reflexive and visual arts based research. By utilising these methods, it was possible to elicit data with minimal interruption to the A/R/Tographers as they engaged with the project. The methodological approach employed was embedded within the research design and well matched to the subject of the investigation (Creswell, 2014). The ethical considerations of the study are also considered in this chapter. Interpretation and the authentic voice of the A/R/Tographers were placed at the heart of the study to provide insights into their subjective world (Grover, 2004). The methods employed through which data was collected are also discussed and aligned with their suitability in relation to the chosen methodologies and ethical guidelines.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive historic and contemporary review of the literature pertaining to democracy in education, focusing on democratic learning spaces. Inhibitors to democratic learning frameworks are explored through the theories of Ranciere, (1991; 2010). I draw on the work of theorists and writers who explore issues concerning identity, culture and space establishing links between communication and the process of making. hooks (1994; 2003; 2010), and her seminal philosophies regarding conscious teaching were my principal guiding beacon throughout the study and her theories are referred to throughout this chapter.

Chapters three and four form the case study research and analysis. They comprise of a case study accompanied by vignettes taken from each participant followed by analysis and discussion using the research literature. They are broken down as follows.

- Chapter three contains vignettes of data taken from each participant during the course of the research project.
- Chapter four offers data collected at the commencement of the A/R/Tography Collective, examines data arising from a trip to

Tate Exchange, Liverpool with the A/R/Tographers and explores the conclusion of the A/R/Tography research project.

Chapter five draws together the findings that the analysis of the data has revealed and the thesis concludes with a précis of my research and how it contributes to the field of art education.

Chapter One Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The methodology for this qualitative study was a matter of extensive deliberation. The thesis centres round the creation of an informal making space and explores relationships that arise out of the setting. It was paramount that the research design allowed the voices of the A/R/Tographers to be heard and that they were represented as collaborators in the research (Grover, 2004). I have allowed the data to indicate which methods to employ when gathering data, and the research methods are embedded within the research (Creswell, 2014). My research is a study concerning individual and collective experiences in attending the A/R/Tography group. After careful consideration, I decided that a case study was appropriate using a mixed methodological approach incorporating visual research methods and a written reflexive narrative.

By employing these methods, I have been able to enter the research environment and elicit data with minimal interruption to the A/R/Tographers as they engaged with the project. The relationships arising out of creative practices were at the crux of the thesis and by employing this approach, both myself and the A/R/Tographers would be fully immersed within the space, fostering autonomy and spontaneity, qualities associated with the creative process. I was directly in the field of research and as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write, "...in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social" (p.20). By using this approach, I was also able to acknowledge and value my own personal involvement and contribution to the study.

Research Design

In order to give the A/R/Tographers a sense of belonging to the research project rather than it being viewed as an extra-curricular activity, I decided to give the group a name. When reading through literature on visual research methods I came across the name *a/r/tography*. This is described by Irwin (2013) as, "...a research methodology, a creative practice, and a performative pedagogy that lives in the practices of the in-between" (p.198). The term *a/r/tography* resonated with me, as it is a hybrid mix of the words art and photography and indeed the definition is blurred genres (Irwin, 2004). The reference to the *inbetween* and ambiguity of genres seemed fitting for an experimental research project designed to work outside of the curriculum framework, within a school environment. The objective of appropriating the use of a term encompassing both art and photography was aimed at encouraging students, who would not necessarily perceive themselves to be creative, to participate in the study, but also to give the group a name under which to identify. Irwin (2013) claims that, "...there can be no being *a/r/tography* without the processes of becoming *a/r/tography*" (p.201). This statement resonated with me as I was keenly aware that although a space and name had been provided for the group, it would only be through the process of working alongside each other and forming relationships that we would become A/R/Tographers.

As referred to in the introduction, the term *a/r/tography* is defined as a form of, "...practice-based research within the arts and education" (Irwin, et al., 2013 p.199). The term has been used to describe the professional practices of educators, artists and researchers working together to make, create and provide new ways of understanding (Irwin, et al., 2013). It seemed apparent that within the research design, *a/r/tographic* methodologies should be employed, with the students

working as collaborators within the visual arts based research process. A/r/tography is defined by Irwin (2013) as offering, "...moments of encounters, a shifting of consciousness, an opportunity to consider other ways of knowing our world" (p.201). These were qualities I wished to foster and nurture within the group setting. I have therefore applied a pre-existing arts-based research methodology to a research space existing between curriculum and self-generated art. By employing this method, rather than professionals learning together; as is the case with Irwin's vision of a/r/tography, collectively we would become A/R/Tographers working alongside each other. By choosing to identify as part of the A/R/Tography Collective and define myself as a fellow A/R/Tographer, I was also able to intellectually distance myself from the tensions I was experiencing in my role of art educator.

As previously stated, the school I have undertaken my research project in is a mixed secondary community school. In the context of the county, the school is the largest in the area and the students who attend are from a wide-ranging demographic. The students are from diverse social backgrounds and I would refer to the school as a fully comprehensive school. The school is situated in a generally affluent area. However, as with the majority of schools, there is a disparity between the wealthier students and students who rely on free school meals. Although students wear uniform to alleviate any perceived social difference, in my experience disparities in terms of social privilege are revealed in relation to issues arising within the school, such as attendance and in some cases outward appearance. The school has a cohort of service students from a nearby army base and a small portion of students who are in the care system. There is also a community of Muslim Bangladeshi students within the school. As an educator I have always appreciated the diversity within the culture of the school as it has the feel of a micro community. However, I am aware that due to large cohorts within each year group, class sizes can be large and it is not possible to accommodate and meet every child's needs. The school in which I have

undertaken my research has a supportive education department where students who have learning differences that require special educational provision are accommodated. This could include social, mental and emotional health together with sensory and physical needs (Research School, 2018).

Ofsted identified the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals within the school to be lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also lower than is usually seen, and the majority of students are of White British heritage (Inspection Report, 2015). All of the male A/R/Tographers who chose to take part in the study attended the supportive education department due to difficulty accessing the curriculum within the classroom environment. In addition, the A/R/Tographer identified as Tim has a diagnosis of dyspraxia and Jake is termed as having additional social and emotional needs. The A/R/Tographer identified as Lenny comes from a mixed-race single parent background. Lenny's father is Turkish and now resides in Turkey. Alice comes from a single-parent family and is eligible for free school meals. Conversely, the data elicited by Ofsted demonstrates that the students who were in the minority within mainstream education within the school, were in the majority within the A/R/Tography space. There were other A/R/Tographers within the group who in my opinion had more social advantage, but they were within the minority and this will be addressed further in the following sub-chapter discussing ethics.

Ethics

The ethical implications were a matter of considerable importance throughout. I was keenly aware that I would be representing students who had chosen to participate from minority groups within the school and was determined that interpretation of the research and authenticity of participant voice would be placed at the heart of this study. Sikes

(2015) highlights that,

Ethical considerations in research with children and young people occur at all stages of the research process. They should be considered as an ongoing and reflexive part of the research process throughout the life of a research project and not just as the first hurdle to be overcome (p.1).

Together with employing a reflexive lens through which to evaluate my own position, ethical implications were also monitored and addressed when collecting and analysing the data. Grover (2004) argues that authentic social research should give power and voice to the child, providing insights into their subjective world. By employing the above ethical considerations to both the A/R/Tographers and the data arising from the study, I would assert that the findings reveal genuine insights. Although it could be argued that there was an element of self-interest in terms of my personal investment within the research project, it was important to me as a researcher and in terms of ethics that this did not overshadow the responsibilities I had to the A/R/Tographers. Denzin (1989) argues:

Our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us (p.83).

This primary obligation to the A/R/Tographers permeated and influenced the entire study, and I was mindful of the trust that had been placed in me by the A/R/Tographers to represent them as authentically as possible. Due to the nature of the stories that arose through the course of the research project, I was mindful of the responsibility of analysing and interpreting the data correctly through the entire research

process. Sikes (2015) suggests that writing about lives carries a “heavy ethical burden” (p.1), as researchers are writing and interpreting storied accounts of lives which may resonate with participants long after the research has concluded. This was particularly pertinent to my research involving young people. Ensuring these ethical dilemmas were anticipated and accounted for was an ongoing process. I was mindful of what Pink (2007) speaks of as the, “...process of negotiation and collaboration with informants, through which they stand to achieve from their own objectives, rather than an act of taking information away and the idea of “creating something together” (p.40).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that the essence of narrative enquiry lies in the relationship between researcher and researched, and the relationship is relational. Within the A/R/Tography space, the experiences and stories that arose through making alongside the A/R/Tographers, were magnified by my own experiences. This was taken into consideration when choosing which voices to prioritise during the duration of the project. All of the A/R/Tographers engaged with both the project and each other in the space. However, certain individual stories spoke to me more than others due to my own subjective experiences. As the sessions progressed, it became evident that certain A/R/Tographers would seek me out during the course of the hour to speak with me on a range of topics that arose through the process of making. Others wished me to collect materials but would not choose to sit and talk. When reflecting on which A/R/Tographers’ voices to prioritise, it became apparent that I had an ethical and moral obligation to tell the storied accounts that arose. This is what Clandinin and Murphy (2009) refer to as, “...commitment to the relational which locates ethical relationships at the heart of narrative inquiry” (p.600).

The fact that I was an educator working within the school, was problematic in terms of how I was viewed by the A/R/Tographers throughout the duration of the research project. Irrespective of the fact that I worked alongside certain A/R/Tographers outside of the

curriculum, the role of teacher was something I could not step away from. This cannot be removed, and I was mindful that this imbalance needed to be addressed at the commencement of the research project and reflected upon when analysing and disseminating the data. I acknowledged from the outset of the research that it was not possible to discard my teacher persona. Tolich (2016) and Sieber and Tolich (2013) suggest from the commencement of the research, it is necessary to anticipate and mitigate any potential harm to both researcher and participants. They propose drawing up ethical guidelines based on consent, consultation and vulnerability. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) assert that with such a framework in place, the process of continual review and assessment is paramount to ensure participants are safeguarded from stress and exploitation. I concur with Mizen (2005) that, "...children are rational agents actively engaged with the social world around them...thus capable of providing informed consent, or conversely, of withdrawing this at any time" (p.126).

However, I was also mindful of the power imbalance within such research and from the outset, prior consent from parents and guardians was acquired (Mizen, 2005 p.126). Due to the fact that the research was taking place in a traditional school setting, written permission was also obtained from the senior management for the research to take place on the school premises. By embarking on the process of negotiation and collaboration that Pink (2007) speaks of, and ensuring that my study was participant centred, I was confident that issues arising regarding legitimacy, power and control could be negotiated through the conceptual framework, which had been designed for participant experiences to be heard without any kind of coercion.

The protection of the A/R/Tographers from risk of significant harm, both during the research process and as a consequence of the research was crucial. Alderson (1995) suggests that an "Impact on Children" statement for each research proposal should examine the likely effects of the research questions, methods and conclusions on the subjects and

on all young people affected by the findings” (p.41). As part of preempting the impact the research would have on the A/R/Tographers, I considered the potential of the disclosure of sensitive information. In order to deal with the issue of disclosure, Piper and Simons (as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2005), suggest preparing a statement indicating that all information would be treated as confidential unless it led to concerns about a Students’ or another’s safety. Morrow and Richards (1996) concur arguing that, “...children should be entitled to the same degree of confidentiality and privacy as adult research subjects, with the added stipulation that researchers will have to deal with cases of disclosure of potential harm as and when they arise” (p.95). Should an issue arise where the researcher deems it necessary to report confidential information then Alderson, (1995) recommends the researcher should try to discuss the issue with the child first, therefore allowing agency. I have used these guidelines to explore the ethical judgments that my thesis required.

It could be argued that the A/R/Tographers felt an obligation to take part in the study due to the fact that I was a teacher within the school. This brought in ethical considerations in relation to the issue of power (Mizen, 2005). To address this imbalance, I invited all key stage four students who had taken art and design or photography as a subject, to participate in the study by letter. Those who did express an interest were entirely self-selecting. Although letters had been sent out to parents, guardians and potential participants’ explaining the nature of the research, once the A/R/Tographers’ had given their informed consent in writing, I discussed the nature of the research, how the study would be conducted and what the intended use of my research was. All A/R/Tographers were provided with a copy of the *Participant Information Sheet* supplied by the University of Chester. One of the primary ethical considerations was that after the completion of the study, my existing relationship with the A/R/Tographers would not be compromised after our association as “researcher and researched” came

to an end (Ellis, 2009, p308). In order to pre-empt this, I ensured details of the duration of the project were clearly stated in the *Participant Information Sheet* and verbally communicated deadlines throughout the duration of the project. By taking this course of action, I endeavoured to assist the A/R/Tographers feel they had agency within the project and were active and powerful (Mahoney, 2007, p.46).

Anonymity and confidentiality are long-established principles in social research practice (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2007). Due to the sensitivity of the information disclosed during the course of the research project, it was imperative that participant identities would be protected. Although descriptions are contained within the text, all A/R/Tographers were given pseudonyms, as were any other people who featured incidentally in the research. The introduction to each individual in the case study is designed to give the reader an understanding of the character, without disclosing details, which would reasonably enable an individual to be identified. As both individual and collective artwork had been created during the course of the research study, any images that appear in the thesis do so under the pseudonym of the maker.

Consent forms and permissions for the photographing of the artwork and the A/R/Tographers was sought prior to commencement of the project. The images contained within the body of the text ensure that A/R/Tographers are facing away from the camera or have parts of their faces obscured. Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2007) observe this is, "...a common approach favoured by social researchers to present visual data in its entirety, with consent and not attempt to anonymise individuals" (p.423). I chose not to anonymise the individuals through pixelating their images, as agency over both their work and how they were represented within the research was paramount. Nutbrown, (2011) argues that pixelating images may represent a further, "crisis of representation" and "Othering" of the child in the research (p.3). This

would move away from the aims of the study, which was to enable A/R/Tographers a level of autonomy and freedom within the research process. All artwork created by the group was the property of the creator or collaborators and permissions were sought in writing for the work to appear in the body of the thesis. Pink (2007;2012), a visual researcher identifies the importance of developing a relationship of mutual trust in order that the images taken emerge from collaborations between researcher and participant.

I was aware that not only did I have an ethical responsibility to the A/R/Tographers, but also to the people that incidentally appeared in the data (Sikes, 2015; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Identification of any kind was something that I was anxious to avoid. However, I acknowledge that there is no guaranteed way in which to protect identities (Bryman, 2012). I have acknowledged and given my name as that of the researcher. There is a possibility that through analysis a reader may be able to identify the individuals within the study.

Although this is acknowledged, I have taken reasonable precautions to guard against this happening and acknowledge that the content of this study does not present issues of risk. Sikes (2012) warns against complacency in relation to the “complexities and contradictions” of these ethical issues (p.17). I am confident I have not been complacent in relation to issues of risk and that I have taken appropriate precautions to address the above.

Case Study

Finding the right methodology with which to represent the A/R/Tographers was of considerable importance. As previously stated, the A/R/Tographers were self-selecting and the majority came from a minority demographic within the school. The very fact that the A/R/Tographers had chosen to take part in the study, suggested there

was a need to represent them as accurately as possible and allow their voices to be heard through the unfolding data. Employing the use of case study with a narrative, reflexive approach, was well matched to the subject of investigation (Crewell, 2014). A/R/Tography is defined by Irwin (2013) as offering, "...moments of encounters, a shifting of consciousness, an opportunity to consider other ways of knowing our world" (p.201). The project had been designed to facilitate individual and collective connections through the process of making and I was an A/R/Tographer working within the study. I was immersed in the field and it was important that I was present and in the moment for the A/R/Tographers throughout each session. The use of case study enabled me to observe occurring phenomena and emphasise episodes of nuance in context (Stake, 1995).

The use of case study also enabled me to provide an authentic account of the A/R/Tographic experience (Simons, 2009) whilst being as Stake (2006) writes, "non-interventive and empathic" (p.12). My research is a case study concerning individual and collective experiences in attending the A/R/Tography group. A case study is defined by Creswell (2014) as an in-depth analysis of a case bound by time and activity, as was the case with A/R/Tography. The use of a case study was appropriate, as it is a methodology employed to understand activity within circumstances (Stake, 1995). Similarities can be found here with the definition of A/R/Tography, which is a term used to describe the collective practices of individuals to provide new ways of understanding (Irwin, et al., 2013). By employing the use of a case study, a symbiotic relationship was formed between arts-based research and the arising dialogue; therefore, facilitating an immersive experience for both the A/R/Tographers and myself.

I was subsequently able to develop an analysis of the A/R/Tographers through their engagement with creative practices within the making space retrospectively. Although the use of case study was appropriate

in this instance, there were limitations to the same as by nature they are, “...a particularization not a generalization” (Stake, 2006). I acknowledge that the themes arising from the data are specific to the context of the study and the people involved. However, as highlighted in the introductory chapter, the issues I was dealing with potentially were not specific to the culture of the school in which I was working, but had wider implications due to the current political climate. Stake (1995) concurs arguing that case studies in education are about people and programmes. He goes further to suggest that they are of interest due to both their “uniqueness and commonality” (p.1).

Stake, (2006) compares case studies to storytelling asserting that they are not usually guided by problems but more so issues (p.127). This seemed an appropriate method, as it was paramount in the case of the A/R/Tography group that I did not commence the study with the view that I had a problem to solve. It was important to me that the study was free from issue-based constraints and evolved organically.

Therefore, the study was designed to investigate the phenomena that occurred innately throughout the duration of the project (O'Donoghue, 2009). During the course of the study, data was collected reflecting the A/R/Tographers physical, economic and political setting of their experiences as identified by Stake (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The data was then analysed to understand how and why the A/R/Tographers interpreted their experiences the way that they did (Bryman, 2012). The use of case study enabled in-depth analysis of the issues arising with a view to understanding the issue from the A/R/Tographers' perspective (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017).

Stake (1995, p.107) reminds researchers that a desire to tell the authentic story and “get it right” is not enough and it is essential that discipline and protocols are followed in pursuit of accuracy. Yin (2013) highlights the importance of triangulating data to ensure that the case study has rendered participant perspectives accurately. Therefore,

triangulation of the data was necessary, with regards to the correct representation of the A/R/Tographers within the research. For me, triangulation was not just about accurately representing the voices of A/R/Tographers, but to ensure that the research process was transparent in terms of honesty and trustworthiness. It was important to ensure that each individual felt that they were an integral part of the research design and were not simply there to be studied. By employing holistic methods of gathering data and sharing findings with the A/R/Tographers, I was able to ensure that their authentic voices were heard within the study (Pillow, 2003). This enabled the A/R/Tographers to a degree to be 'subject' or 'collaborator' in the research process rather than simply study 'object' (Grover, 2004 p.4). Triangulation was conducted by reading drafted field notes to the A/R/Tographers. By employing this method, I was searching for additional interpretations more than confirmation of a single meaning (Flick, 1992).

Due to the number of A/R/Tographers involved in the research, the case study was broken down into reflective vignettes written after each session. The vignettes serve to describe episodes to illustrate issues and elements of the case study (Stake, 1995). Al Sadi and Basit (2017) assert that vignettes are useful in allowing researchers to understand sophisticated concepts in particular in relation to sensitive topics. The vignettes presented are based on my direct experience of working within the A/R/Tography space (Humphreys, 2005), and are designed to provide authentic accounts of the arising phenomena. I was an A/R/Tographer fully immersed in the field of study. As I made and created alongside fellow A/R/Tographers, I was not merely an observer in the proceedings, but became embroiled in the narratives arising out of the space. It was therefore entirely appropriate that the narratives arising, should be reflected upon and represented through narrative vignettes. I chose to write in the form of present-tense narrative vignettes enabling me to capture the contextual richness of the arising phenomena (Rådesjö, Göteborgs, Utbildningsvetenskapliga &

Gothenburg, 2018). Erickson (1986, p.149) describes this as, "...vivid portrayal[s] of the conduct of an event of everyday life" in order that the reader may have a, "...sense of being there in the scene" (Erickson 1986, p.150).

I have chosen to provide a vignette for each of the A/R/Tographers in the case study. This is followed by my critical reflections of each particular vignette interwoven with supporting literature (Al Sadi & Basit, 2017). By approaching the vignettes in such a manner I was able to ensure that each of the A/R/Tographers are represented equally and have the opportunity to have their stories heard both individually and collectively. By employing the use of narrative vignettes, I was able to, "...write short reflexive stories designed to portray an event as if it was presently unraveling in front of the reader" (Rådesjö et al., 2018). I acknowledge that the vignettes represent my personal experiences and understanding. They are presented true to my experience of the occurring phenomena and provide an authentic account of the data collected for this study. Therefore, within the content of the vignettes, excerpts written in italics refer to my personal reflections written in response to observations. Although they are true reflections of my experience, they are written retrospectively based on conversations and reflective notes. As previously discussed, it was important that the flow of A/R/Tography was not interrupted, therefore significant moments arising out of the data have remained the same. Conversations that take place are not recorded verbatim. However, as Rådesjö et al. (2018) assert, "...this should not degrade their inclusion - they did serve a purpose central to the data presented in this study" (p.72). That is to authentically capture the voices of the A/R/Tographers arising out of the study.

The questions posed by the study are inherently about the relationships arising out of the informal making space including the impact on my professional relationships with students. It was therefore imperative

that the phenomena was scrutinised through my own experiences of the A/R/Tography space and that I identified and highlighted elements of my own learning (Rådesjö et al., 2018). Therefore, each of the vignettes presented were selectively chosen as to which best highlighted the A/R/Tographers and my experiences within the space. This is defined by Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) as, “epiphanies which stem from, or are made possible, by being part of a culture” (p.277). In this case the culture arising out of the A/R/Tography Collective. In order to best represent the A/R/Tographers both collectively and individually, I made “...disciplined, principled choices and strategic decisions about how to represent and reconstruct social worlds, actors, scenes, and action” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.108). I would assert that the vignettes contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of the A/R/Tography space and the individuals represented. They have been written to, “...engage a reader and incite his or her emotions” (Rådesjö et al., 2018 p.73). This is critical to the nature of the study, as this thesis arose from my dissatisfaction working within a system that was not allowing such occurrences within art education. I would assert that through revealing the experiences of the A/R/Tographers to the reader (Ellis et al, 2011), they are portrayed as people rather than objects to be studied (Grover, 2004 p.4). Subsequently the vignettes each stand as a “theoretical abstraction” (Rådesjö et al., 2018 p.73), which can stand in isolation as testament to each A/R/Tographers’ individual experience, or collectively as a social phenomena arising out of the A/R/Tography space.

Narrative Enquiry

The research methodology for this qualitative study was situated within a narrative paradigm. It is grounded in a philosophical position that endeavoured to explore meaningful communication through telling the A/R/Tographers’ stories through a case study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) contend that the prime concern of the interpretive

paradigm is to understand the subjective world of the human experience. They go further to suggest there is an assumption that the outcomes of the research should be viewed from the participant lens as opposed to the research lens. I concur with Cohen et. al (2007) that it was essential that the narratives of the A/R/Tographers were told through the research, my own included. The research lens, although of equal importance as previously stated, is situated in an analysis and discussion section after each vignette, ensuring that the reader is fully engaged with the A/R/Tographers narratives. The narrative methodology was the appropriate approach to employ, enabling me to investigate the dialogue and stories that unfolded through the observation of narratives within the A/R/Tography setting, whilst also being immersed in the field of study. Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, (2007) propose, “Convincingly true-to-life stories can best be written by those who know and understand situations well enough to allow them to create stories that hang together in a credible way” (p.100).

Narrative Inquiry has its roots within the work of Dewey (1938), who discusses the nature of experience foregrounding particular elements at certain times. According to Dewey, experience can be both a personal and social phenomenon. Dewey suggests that, although people are individuals they cannot be understood as the same and that it is important that the researcher also looks at individuals within their social context. Dewey concludes that human experience can become a site where knowledge is constructed. The idea of experience as a site for knowledge is what occurred within the A/R/Tography group through the creation of relational art. While each individual worked on his or her own projects, their work was also situated in the wider context of the social group and the even wider context of the school. Schon (1991) describes this site of knowledge as, “knowing in action”, which leads onto the concept of, “reflection in action” (p.72). This formed an integral part of my research framework. The site of knowledge is pertinent to the research of Bruner (1966) who proposes that meaning making is

constructed through experience and that stories are not constructed in the real world but in people's heads (Bruner, 2004). Bruner concludes that if these stories are to be understood, there needs to be knowledge of the deeper social structure that underpins these narratives.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry is directed towards understanding the meaning of experiences. By employing this approach, I have been able to work alongside the A/R/Tographers during the sessions and immerse myself both within their work and their conversations. In order to not disrupt the flow of such moments together, field notes were written retrospectively of the threads of activities and conversations that arose, writing storied accounts of particular moments in time (Weir, 2013). This holistic, narrative approach suited the relationship I had built with

A/R/Tographers and the storied accounts created around their lives. Although every story is unique and situated within its own particular context, Robinson and Hawpe (1986), argue that similarities can be found with other stories as they are built on a universal set of story structures and relationships. This enabled me to position the A/R/Tographers stories within the wider educational field and research context, in order to gain an insight into why the phenomenon may have occurred.

Byrne (2017) argues that narrative inquiry can come across as re-telling information verbatim and be devoid of imagination. In addition, there is the problematic nature of language and how narrative approaches are subject to interpretation. Dewey (1938) also warns of the danger of reconstructing less than adequate stories and creating "miseducative" experiences (p.85). In order to redress this creative and retelling imbalance, I have aimed to re-tell stories through authentication (Byrne, 2017), although the terms narrative and story are used interchangeably (McQuillan, 2000). The term *story*, is defined by Kim (2016) as, "...a detailed organization of narrative events arranged in a (story) structure based on time although the events are not necessarily in that order"

(p.8). I have employed this strategy when composing the reflective vignettes, in order to best highlight the experiences of the A/R/Tographers. Shuman (2005) argues that storytelling provides inspiration and new frames of reference to both tellers and listeners and I would assert that through using the terms interchangeably, I have been able to creatively tell the A/R/Tographers' storied accounts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge the potential tensions and dilemmas using a narrative approach can cause through immersion in the field then distance (p.81). I would argue that the potential conflict was counterbalanced through the triangulation process and reflection on the gathered data, as stated previously (Yin, 2013).

My research explores relationships that arise in informal forums, focusing specifically on relational creativity. This meeting of art and narrative is discussed by (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006), who speak of a place where art and writing are, "interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings" (p.124). McKenna (2015) goes further to suggest that narrative inquiry can also be related to how one interprets aesthetic experiences. The A/R/Tography space facilitated not only the telling of stories, but a place where A/R/Tographers could reflect on the creation of the visual element of their work; shared individual and collective visual experiences. The interconnectedness of meaning through narrative and aesthetic experiences will be discussed further in the chapter Visual Research Methodologies.

Reflexivity

At the core of this mixed methodological approach is my use of Reflexivity. (Schon, 1991) proposes that the reflexive experience is at the heart of knowing in action. The reflexive research paradigm is a postmodern construct, allowing the researcher to stress their

involvement, their own lived experiences and what they bring to the research project (Etherington, 2004). Narrative inquiry and reflexivity are autonomous and occurred naturally when listening to the

A/R/Tographers, and when

I was involved in conversations arising during the process of making. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) propose that reflexivity has become a progressively important feature of contemporary social research. Etherington (2004) goes further to suggest that, "At best, reflexivity occurs in the creative space between objectivity and subjectivity, allowing something unique and dynamic to unfold" (p.162). The creation of the research space enabled me to explore the relationship dynamics, reflecting on my own experiences to further understand my comprehension of participant experience (Kiesinger, 1998). By using a reflexive approach within the research, I was able to acknowledge my own subjective position whilst enhancing the ethical integrity of the research (Mosselson, 2010).

Pillow (2003) argues that reflexivity can assist in developing reciprocity between researcher and researched, allowing a more democratic research relationship to develop. Pillow goes further to suggest that, "Interest in this practice has led to "multi-vocal" texts and explorations of attempts to let the data, the subjects, speak for themselves" (p.179). The nature of the research project was to prioritise the voices of the A/R/Tographers within the narrative, enabling them to be collaborators within the process. Etherington (2004) refers to this as "a balance of both voices" (p.38). Certainly the reflexive analysis of field notes and the immersive way in which participant observation was undertaken, allowed me to be privy to data that may not have been revealed through more traditional research methodologies. An example of this is how personal information was revealed as I worked alongside the A/R/Tographers. The reciprocal nature of this practice also enabled A/R/Tographers to be worked "with" instead of "on" (Pillow, 2003 p.179).

By adopting this approach, I was able to include elements of my own personal stories, albeit ones that I was not aware would, or needed to be told. Pillow (2003) identifies this as, "...reflexivity that pushes toward an unfamiliar, towards the uncomfortable" (p.192). Clandinin and Connelly (2000), go further to acknowledge that the, "...confronting of ourselves in our narrative past makes us vulnerable as inquirers because it makes secret stories public." (p.62). These elements of my own life stories were revealed through vignettes and narratives, which unfolded during the course of the research. Reflexivity also enabled me to disclose my social positioning and the preconceptions I brought to the table as a researcher, rather than an impartial detached observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Allen (2013) suggests that, "Selfreflexivity and dissent are integral to developing as a critical and creative, educated person. Not just the freedom but also the individual strength to dissent is essential" (p.51). By embracing Allen's reflexive notion of dissent, I was able to explore the tensions that arose between my teaching identity and artist identity.

However, reflexivity is not without its critics. Pillow (2003) argues it can be seen as self-indulgent, narcissistic, and tiresome and at worse undermining the conditions necessary for emancipatory research (p.176). Gitlen and Patai (1994) go further to suggest that reflexivity is a privilege of, "...academics engaged in the erotics of their own language games" (p.64), ultimately questioning whether self-reflexivity does actually produce better research. Pillow (2004) asserts that the position of reflexive researcher is, "...not an easy or comfortable" research methodology (p.193). Davies (2002) concurs with Pillow highlighting the intimate nature of the reflexive researcher. Sustained monitoring and self-evaluation are necessary to ensure that the research does not become a reflection of the researchers' thoughts rather than the participants' (p.186). The process of sustained monitoring, selfevaluation and triangulation, enabled the A/R/Tographers to be

worked with, allowing a balance of both the researcher's and A/R/Tographers' voices to be heard (Etherington, 2004).

As aforesaid it was paramount to my research that the authentic voices of the A/R/Tographers were represented in my research. To ensure that data collected and examined did not become a description of my personal perceptions, I acknowledged my own positionality (Mosselson, 2010). The writings of theorists such as Dash, (2006; 2007; 2010) and hooks, (1994; 2003; 2010), have been a source of inspiration, as they allow their personal and academic voice to speak through the narratives of their work. This was the technique I employed when working with the A/R/Tographers (Kiesinger, 1998, p.38). Ultimately, I would argue that reflexivity enabled me to deliver an honest account of the A/R/Tographers' experiences of the group and provided an appropriate, "basis for the overall authority of [my] findings" (Davies, 2002 p.272). Areas where my own subjectivity arose were identified, as appropriate, within the analysis of the case study and the findings in chapter five.

Visual Research Methodologies

Reflexivity involves working with multiple narratives, all of which are open to interpretation (Etherington, 2004). Similarities can be drawn between my subjective role as a researcher and the subjective lens I employ as an art practitioner to view and interpret art works, enabling me to experience what Davis (2003) refers to as the, "aesthetic whole" (p.200). I recognise that an object can hold many different meanings depending on the perspective of the viewer, and every way of seeing is a way of not seeing Eisner (2002). Running in conjunction with narrative and reflexive methodologies, I chose to use visual research methodologies, which fitted with the duality of my role as art educator and researcher. The research project was designed to enable both the A/R/Tographers and I to work alongside each other in an informal

making space. It was important that the methodologies employed also explored the visual outcomes.

Arts-based research as a field of educational inquiry has grown significantly in recent years (Barone, 2006). O'Donoghue (2009) proposes art-based research is founded on the belief that, "...the arts have the ability to contribute particular insights into, and enhance understandings of phenomena that are of interest to educational researchers" (p.352). For Eisner (2006) the arts are able to capture that which is, "...either un-securable or much more difficult to secure through other representational forms" (p.11). Central to my research was the informal making space created in which I would be able to work alongside A/R/Tographers to create art. Therefore, the art created formed part of the data analysed. Eisner (1997) makes the valid point that, "Accompanying the demand for arts-based approaches to inquiry there must also be a call for tough critics, those who advocate alternatives but will not substitute novelty and cleverness for substance" (p.9). This is something that I was mindful of when negotiating my way through the research project. Simply using an artsbased approach because I was an arts educator was not good enough reason to employ the same.

Arts-based research is not without criticism. Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2008) assert that, "...the artistic aspects of education research have often been implicit, seldom acknowledged as such, and have often been achieved through luck rather than purposeful development" (p.11). Nelson (2013) argues that, "...those within arts communities who take as read the value and intelligence of arts practices, are sometimes shocked to find in the context of the academy that their work is regarded as insubstantial - entertaining and decorative rather than knowledge producing" (p.48). The methodological approach taken was embedded within the research design and well matched to the subject of the investigation (Creswell,

2014). I have been able to employ a visual research methodology and a narrative approach to form, "...a collaborative relationship between images and text" (Ravetz, 2000). Smith (2009) refers to this as "bidirectional focus" acknowledging that practice and research are interwoven into an, "iterative cyclic web" (p.2). Cahnmann-Taylor and Seigismund (2008) call for more researchers to experiment with, "hybrid forms for scholarship's sake" (p.24). It is within this spirit that the research project has been designed, to give both a platform for new emerging arts-based research practices alongside traditional research methodologies in order to further advance new forms of knowledge. My research is engaged with concepts of collective and individual making and individual and collective response to the same. (Barrett & Bolt, 2007) claim "...knowledge is derived from doing and from the senses" (p.30). They further state that this type of research is epistemologically, ontologically and pedagogically productive due to the necessity for the researcher to draw on "subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research" (p.30). Eisner (1991) discusses the *transactive account*, that is the way that humans negotiate a meaningful space for themselves between the subjective and objective divide. Heidegger (1962) also identifies particular forms of knowledge that can be derived through the process of the handling of materials, defined as *Handlability*. This concept of knowledge being generated through the process of making, is an experience I captured within my research through employing a visual research methodology.

Data Collection Tools

I now wish to examine the data collection tools I employed for the purpose of the study. Each were selected due to their appropriateness in relation to the chosen methodologies and the ethical guidelines previously discussed. Data collection involved A/R/Tographers

attending weekly sessions for an hour, over a sixth month period. I captured the emerging data by writing up my field notes immediately after each session, and keeping a diary of my personal reflections. By choosing this method Janesick (2000) states that, "...the researcher owns up to his or her perspective on the study and may even track its evolution by keeping a critical reflective journal on the entire research process and the particular role of the researcher" (p.385). Watt (2007) asserts for the researcher a journal is a valuable tool arguing that, "If I was not writing down ideas and thoughts as they came to me I'd be missing a lot" (p.84). The reason I chose this method was to fully embrace the spirit of the project. I wanted to foster a level of spontaneity and autonomy within the group with no disruptions, enabling the group to become an immersive experience for both the A/R/Tographers and myself. Campbell and Smith (2007) observe, "Convincingly true-to-life stories can best be written by those who know and understand situations well enough to allow them to create stories that hang together in a credible way" (p.100). In order for these credible stories to emerge, it was important that I was actively engaged in the study. Each piece of data was collected with the A/R/Tographers' permission in the knowledge that it would form part of the data. All work created by the A/R/Tographers, my notes, photographs and film, were held securely, as stipulated in the BERA Guidelines & University of Chester Research Governance Handbook (British Educational Research, 2004).

Visual documentation was collected through the taking of photographs, although I was mindful that this process may be too intrusive, and could possibly inhibit participation if it were I behind the lens. The photographs were therefore taken by the A/R/Tographers within the sessions, documenting the visual process themselves. Any images taken were then emailed to me at the end of each session. The aim was for A/R/Tographers to feel a sense of community and ownership. Democratic learning frameworks were an integral element of my

research, and it was important that the A/R/Tographers had a level of autonomy over their work and a platform from which to do this. By including digital media in which to document the research process, A/R/Tographers had the opportunity to see the study evolve and contribute on a digital platform familiar to them (Mirzoeff, 1999).

According to Esterberg (2002), one of the main challenges for researchers is gaining the trust of participants, whilst simultaneously adopting an almost invisible research persona. The study was designed for me to work alongside the A/R/Tographers. It was never my intention not to be invisible during the research process. However, establishing trust was paramount in order that A/R/Tographers would feel at ease in my company. Once this was established, the data elicited from my presence within the field was invaluable, giving me a unique insight into the world of the A/R/Tographers at particular moments in time. This is what Pinnegar and Daynes, (2007) define as relational narrative inquiry where the researcher and participants embark on a dynamic relationship that promotes growth and learning. By employing this approach, I was able to be a collaborator in the research process (Mahoney, 2007). Relational narrative inquiry enabled me to not only observe verbal exchanges, but physical gesticulations and uses of body language, which also formed part of the data. The fact that I did not carry my journal or field notebook around with me during the A/R/Tography sessions, enabled me to observe rich data as an accepted member of the group. This attempt at a non-hierarchical research approach as advocated by Goodson and Sikes, (2001), allowed the A/R/Tographers to feel empowered which in turn, elicited rich data informing the findings of the study.

I decided that a case study was the appropriate method to employ, using a mixed methodological approach incorporating visual research methods and a written reflexive narrative. This methodology suited the purpose of my research, which was concerned with documenting

individual and collective experiences in attending the A/R/Tography group. This has been critically examined and explored in the previous sub-chapters. It was necessary to use a written reflexive data methodology in order to enter the research environment and elicit data with minimal interruption to the A/R/Tographers as they engaged with the project. In addition to the above, I chose to employ an unstructured interview approach with the A/R/Tographers half way through the study. According to Etherington, (2004) and Goodson and Sikes, (2001), the interview approach is at the core of social research. The interviews took place in my classroom, a familiar non-threatening environment. There was no timeframe to the interviews and I chose not to record the same, in order not to inhibit A/R/Tographers and facilitate an open exchange (Esterberg, 2002). Field notes were written retrospectively (Weir, 2013) and triangulated with the A/R/Tographers for accurate representation (Yin, 2013). I asked each A/R/Tographer the question, “Why did you choose to be part of the study?” The approach was conversational and less formal, enabling the A/R/Tographers to talk about whatever they wished, free of inhibitions, which may or may not be pertinent to the study. I chose this approach to ensure that the A/R/Tographers understood I was interested in them as individuals not just as participants in the study (Grover, 2004). I have used a combination of methodologies and data collection tools in order that my study addressed issues of power imbalance between researcher and researched.

Throughout this chapter I have explored constructive attempts made to ensure that the A/R/Tographers were correctly represented within the study and the research process was transparent in terms of honesty and trustworthiness. I have been mindful that A/R/Tographers become, “...active and powerful in the research” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 38). Perhaps most importantly of all I have endeavoured to share my humanity with the A/R/Tographers in the pursuit of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Bell, 2011).

Themes Arising from the Data

As previously stated, the A/R/Tographers were self-selecting and the majority came from a minority demographic within the school. As addressed in the ethical element of this chapter, it was essential that the arising data was handled with care and sensitivity. Accurate representation and concern for the A/R/Tographers was of great importance and something that I was mindful of through the duration of the research. There were a myriad of issues occurring within the space and it therefore follows that there are a wide range of theorists pertinent to the data. I acknowledge that there are a high number of selected theorists whose work is examined within this thesis. However, I would assert that their inclusion is essential to best understand the nature of the occurring phenomena within the space, and the individuals represented. To not to include them would be doing a disservice to the A/R/Tographers concerned. However, as is the nature of research, I concede that in some cases it has not been possible to fully examine each arising theme to the extent I would like to. However, to acknowledge the occurrence of the same is important, rather than seeking not to address the issues at all. This is critical to the nature of the study as this thesis arose from dissatisfaction working within the current art education system and stands in direct contravention to the conditions that I have been working under, which prompted the research questions. In order for the reader to negotiate the theoretical field with clarity, I have endeavoured to thematically order the data elicited from the study.

The themes arising from the data are;

- Democracy and Freedom
- Spaces of Resistance and Change
- The Art of Communication

- Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching

Within each theme, key theorists have been chosen to interpret and represent the themes arising out of the study. However, as is the nature of research, there are times when theorists and themes blend into each other. This can be likened to A/R/Tography's definition of blurred genres (Irwin, 2004) and seems fitting for a project that has aimed to blur the boundaries between curriculum and self-generated art. Surely it would follow that an A/R/Tographic thesis would blur the boundaries between themes? I make no apologies for this and assert that as an A/R/Tographer I have applied an a/r/tographic methodological process to my writing style.

Democracy and Freedom

This thesis arose through the dissatisfaction I felt with my own teaching practice. I deduced that I had become conditioned to producing units of work for students with prescribed outcomes. The target driven culture of the school had impacted on my pedagogy as the need to measure pupil progress and produce results, in my experience, diminished creativity within the subject. This is indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments' educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016). There was a clear tension within my practice between freedom of expression and adhering to the target driven culture of the school. I draw on the work of Dewey (1916; 1938); Adams (2005; 2013); Adams and Owens (2016) and Ranciere (1991; 2010), to critically examine historical and theoretical concepts of freedom within the classroom and the wider picture of art education. The literature is theorised on both a national and international level in terms of education, as is pertinent to the issues raised in this thesis addressed in the introduction.

Spaces of Resistance and Change

One of the key issues arising out of the data is that the A/R/Tographers like myself, expressed dissatisfaction working within the confines of the curriculum and needed a place to “chill and make art”. This acted in direct contravention to the tightly led curricula within the culture of the school. The need to disobey the above and create a space outside of the curriculum is explored through the theories of Atkinson (2018) and Wilson (2003). I examine existing national and international democratic learning frameworks through an exploration of Room 13 and Reggio Emilia pedagogies. This thesis explores concepts of pupil autonomy and making within democratic learning spaces to bridge the gap between curriculum and personal art within the school environment. It was therefore necessary to examine democratic learning frameworks.

Although each is successful within its own context, none can be transferred directly into the conditions I was working in within the culture of the school. Ultimately, this is an a/r/tographic thesis designed for me to work alongside the A/R/Tographers to explore new ways of understanding. In order to contextualise the same within the school context, I draw on the work of Irwin (2004; 2013) and Irwin and de Cosson (2004) and scrutinise a/r/tography from a historical and theoretical perspective. Applying the fundamental principles to the a/r/t/ography practices occurring within the culture of the school.

The Art of Communication

Prioritising the voices of the A/R/Tographers was placed at the heart of this thesis (Grover, 2004). This particular theme examines the language of communication in the broadest sense of the word, both verbal and non-verbal. To understand the narratives arising out of the A/R/Tography space, I provide contextual background as to how dialogue has been traditionally analysed through linguistics in education. By examining the literature in relation to the same, I was able

to establish that the phenomena arising out of the space were qualitative narratives. The language of communication is theoretically analysed through an a/r/tographical lens, explored through the relationship between theory, researcher and making (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). Verbal communication is mainly explored through the theories of Leslie and Skipper (1990) and Bernstein (1966; 1971). Arising narratives are paramount to this thesis and communication is also explored through the creation of art. This is an A/R/Tographic thesis with its routes situated in visual research methodologies.

A/R/Tography is reflexive by nature, as participants are required to engage with narratives arising from a/r/tographic practices (Bickell, 2006). The creative acts formed symbiotic relationships with the arising narratives, which are explored and examined as a form of communication. I have used the theorists Eisner (1991) and Bourriaud (2002) with which to examine the data. There were occurrences within the space when non-verbal communication spoke just as powerfully as words and this is examined through the lens of Miller (2005).

Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching

The subject of this thesis was prompted by my own crisis of identity as both an artist and an educator. The creation of the A/R/Tography Collective and identifying myself as an A/R/Tographer enabled me to explore my identity within the space. The space also afforded individuals to explore and reveal their own identities. Issues relating to individual and collective identity are explored through the theories of Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1993; 2010) and Dash (2006; 2007; 2010). The idea for this thesis arose through the dissatisfaction I felt with my own pedagogy through teaching the national art and design curriculum. In the introduction I align with Palmer's understanding of education as an ideal I hold central to my pedagogy who asserts that, "...education is about healing and wholeness...finding and claiming ourselves and our

place in the world” (Palmer as cited in hooks, 2003, p.43.) As an art and design educator, working in a busy secondary school environment, I did not feel that the reality of art education I was offering students reflected my ideals. By immersing myself within the field of research, the A/R/Tography space afforded me the time to explore and develop my own teaching pedagogy from a position of care and commitment to each individual, and this will be addressed further in the findings chapter. I have chosen to explore the theories of bell hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) and Jeffs and Smith (2005) in detail as fundamentally their work is informed by personal experience and is reflexive in nature. Their approach to teaching with care and commitment transcends the boundaries of cultures, and are ethics I endeavour to adhere to within my own pedagogy. I am aware that teaching from this perspective may be viewed as suspect and not transferable into pedagogy, and have therefore examined the theories of Uitto (2012) and Van Manen and Li (2002) to address practical concerns regarding the implementation of the same.



Figure 2 “Right Back At You” (2010)

The concept around this artwork was to explore the notion of semiotics, a piece of work that tells you nothing yet shows you everything. Reflecting on the artwork, it could stand as a visual metaphor for my need to search within myself in order to teach from a place of reflexivity and personal experience (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010).

Chapter Two Theoretical Landscape

Framework Structure

In this chapter I explore specific concepts that have emerged from the data arising during the course of the research. The questions posed by the study are inherently about the relationships arising out of informal making spaces. Therefore the research questions are embedded in and arise from the phenomena that occurred within the A/R/Tography space. What follows is an examination of the theoretical landscape in which this thesis is situated, guided by the questions posed in this study. To enable the reader to negotiate the theoretical field with clarity, I have endeavoured to thematically order this chapter in relation to the data elicited from the study. Throughout the course of the research project, as an A/R/Tographer, I was completely immersed in the field of study. The phenomena occurring within the space was spontaneous and autonomous; linked to the process of making alongside the students and characteristic of the a/r/tographic process. I address each theme individually and include key theorists for each theme. Like the occurring phenomena, all theorists used within the context of the themes are inextricably linked and this is acknowledged and reflected where appropriate within the body of the text. I shall now seek to provide context for each arising theme. The themes emerging from the data are Democracy and Freedom, Spaces of Resistance and Change, The Art of Communication and Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching.

Democracy and Freedom

I begin this chapter by exploring the concept of democracy within education. Whilst there is considerable research on this theme, my thesis specifically explores the disparity between curriculum and informal learning, providing a creative democratic learning space for participants to work outside of the curriculum framework. My interpretation of the term *democracy* in the context of the study, is to facilitate student autonomy within a classroom setting and the research project was designed to enable this in practice. I therefore wish to focus specifically on theorists who make the link between creativity and democracy within an educational context Dewey (1916; 1938); Adams (2005; 2013) and Adams and Owens (2016). For the purpose of this thesis, democracy will be referred to in terms of creativity and applied to arts education. My thesis specifically explores creative practices that arise in informal making spaces. The phrase *informal making space*, will be defined as knowledge that occurs outside of the statutory curriculum in England. This aligns with the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005), who define the term as participant led learning that occurs outside of traditional learning frameworks.

One of the earliest educational theorists Dewey (1938), claims that democracy should never be taken as given and is something that has to be delivered and re-born within each generation. Indeed some fifty years later the importance of the rights of a child to an education was written into law under article 28 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990, p.8), as was the rights of a child to freedom of expression in article 13 (p.5). The fact that it is written into a legally binding international agreement, supports this viewpoint and suggests that although democracy is recognised as a fundamental right, the need to reassert this is necessary on a micro and global scale. Theorists such as Ranciere (1991) and hooks (2010) support the view that democracy and equality should be the fundamental principle upon which education

should be founded. The prescriptive nature of delivering the art curriculum with prescribed outcomes suggests the dominance of neoliberalism in many Western governments' educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016). These theorists are important because democracy cannot be taken as a given within education. As previously stated, this thesis arose through the dissatisfaction I felt within the constraints of my own pedagogical practice working in a mainstream secondary school in England.

Adams and Owens (2016) and Dewey (1938) propose that a potential way of implementing the above is through the relationship between art, democracy and education. The national curriculum for art and design, England published by the Government Department of Education (2015), states that, "Art, craft and design embody some of the highest form of human creativity" (p.1). It goes on to declare that high quality art education should "engage, inspire and challenge". Drawing on my experience as a practising artist, in principle I believe that we can learn through the process of making, and that theoretically the objectives of the National Curriculum for Art and Design are underpinned by democratic values. However, conversely as a teacher, discontinuities occur when practically trying to apply the objectives of the National Curriculum of Art and Design within art lessons. There is a conflict between the curriculum framework and the demands this places on teachers as set out in the Ofsted Inspection Handbook (2016). The Handbook provides clearly defined and rigid criteria in order to monitor teaching and learning within the classroom. Education in this sense is the transmission of knowledge (Ranciere, 1991), rather than the concept of democratically talking and learning together without having any perceived outcomes. In my experience, this set criteria becomes an inhibitor to a subject that lends itself so readily to the principles of freedom and creativity.

Ranciere (1991), highlights the problematic nature of progressive education especially when viewed as democratic. For Ranciere the

culture of understanding a subject through validation by assessment is under absolute control of the educator. Ranciere (1991) argues that this validates the pre-determined outcomes of the explicator, rather than measuring actual understanding of the original object of the study. In my experience to achieve these prescribed outcomes, the culture of the art department in the secondary state system that I was part of was competitive and target driven. I felt the need to justify my subject and place within the school curriculum. In order to deliver results expected of me in the outcome driven culture of the school, I was explicating to students rather than facilitating creativity. Adams and Owens (2016) argue that, “while as education is purported as Ranciere states, to make ‘inequality visible’, to make all people equal, it simultaneously functions as a means to endlessly defer the attainment of equality” (p.8). Therefore, a constraint on creativity is the art curriculum itself, that does not allow flexibility for democracy to be nurtured and to flourish. The concept of democracy in education is an ideal I hold central to my pedagogy. However, as demonstrated, in my experience I do not believe that the reality of art education within curriculum time reflects this fundamental right. Arguably, the spirit of democracy is being lost to bureaucratic measures.

The problematic nature of democracy and education is highlighted by Dewey (1916), who demands education be voluntary and that learners subject themselves to the learning process. For Dewey schools are seen as social institutions with the potential for social reform to take place (1916). Dewey argues for an educational curriculum not constrained by content knowledge but a place where the experiences of students are included within the learning process therefore students are active participants in the learning process. However, there is an inconsistency in this argument as education is compulsory and learners have no choice but to conform to a predetermined curriculum framework that specifies what knowledge will

be learnt. Indeed Dewey acknowledges this paradox stating, “Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state

and yet the full social ends of the educative process not to be restricted, constrained or corrupted?” (1916, p.75). In his work *Experience and Education* (1938) Dewey proposes that the educator act in the role of representative for the students within the learning process moving with the needs of the group where control is social. Therefore both teachers and students form part of a community where the educator exercises authority as a representative or agent of the interests of the group as a whole (1938). A potential solution is offered by Adams (2005), who proposes that educators assist and encourage learners by resisting traditional school orthodoxies through contemporary art practices. However, Adams concedes that such methods of resistance are problematic when faced with the schools “institutional context” (p.220). The difficulties in allowing a democratic learning space to exist within the culture of the school, was something that I encountered during the research project. This will be addressed in detail in the case study and reflective vignettes. In my experience, schools are unwilling to take risks through art practices that may not deliver high, measurable outcomes within curriculum time. Students embarking on their two years of learning and exam preparation are primed for success against the set criteria of the curriculum within school time; and outside school through catch up sessions designed to enhance examination knowledge.

Adams (2013) argues that for democracy to exist within education, it is a prerequisite that the rights and responsibilities of the learner are incorporated within Dewey’s model of progressive education. The limitations of the art curriculum are that the rights of the learner have been placed secondary to measured pupil progress. Jeffs and Smith (2005) argue that democratic learning cannot occur inside the curriculum framework and can only be found within informal group settings. The A/R/Tography group that was created for the purpose of this research was such a setting. I gained permission to run the project after school for an hour per week. The A/R/Tography Collective occurred within a school setting, but was not part of the accepted

culture of school. Adams and Owens (2016) explore the juxtaposition between creativity and democracy within a variety of UK and international contexts. For them, democracy is a combination of both imagination and the corresponding notion of citizenship. The term *citizenship* is generally understood to mean how we make society work together. The links between freedom and social responsibility was a phenomenon that occurred and evolved within the A/R/Tography space and will be discussed further in the findings chapter. Adams and Owens (2016) claim that, “conditions for creative practices to flourish in education are largely determined by the extent to which democratic principles are established” (p.7). I aligned my study with the importance of establishing democratic principles within the classroom. The challenge within the research lay not only in establishing democratic principles, but also individually and collectively reasserting these by continually aligning with the theories of Dewey (1938).

Hierarchies within the classroom

I have examined the concept of freedom and democracy in relation to the curriculum framework and now wish to explore hierarchical relationships within the classroom setting. The context of my research is placed firmly within an institutional confine and arguably there are limits to which freedom and democracy can take place. As discussed in the ethics chapter, all the participants in the study were self-selecting. However, there is an argument that the students felt an obligation to take part, as I was a teacher within the school. The relationship between student and teacher is hierarchal due to the nature of the *loco parentis*; this refers to teachers’ legal duties that take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent whilst students are within their care. This is a position I have acknowledged throughout the study and am aware that I cannot move away from. However, there were certain strategies that I was able to employ such as immersing myself fully in the study and identifying as a fellow A/R/Tographer, in order to identify

within the group. Although the research was conducted out of curriculum time, according to Ranciere (1991), there is an assumption that the teacher holds the hierarchical role whilst working alongside participants'. In order to explore this relationship in more detail I will now examine these theories. In the thesis 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster' Ranciere (1991) argues that achieving equality within an educational setting is problematic because it runs contrary to accepted assumptions of what education means. The problematic nature of the definition of education was examined in the introduction to this thesis and prompted the research questions. There was a tension between my artist and pedagogical self. Education for my pedagogue self was measurable in terms of pupil progress, whereas for my artist self it was something less tangible in nature although in my experience of equal importance.

According to Ranciere (1991), the student is equal to the teacher in ignorance and the source of knowledge is the subject being learnt. Ranciere argues that this ignorance on the part of the teacher is a prerequisite for learning to occur. Therefore, both the educator and the educated start at the same point in time and learn together. Adams and Owens (2016) also argue for learning to be derived through "participative practices...where authority resides in the learning environment" (p.15). Dewey (1938) also discusses how environment is important for the student although acknowledges that managing this is difficult, because the interactions must fit with the inclinations of the individual, rather than the individual conforming to the conditions set by the environment. The idea of the environment becoming the place of power and authority was the concept behind the creation of the A/R/Tography group. The research was designed in order that I would be able to make and create alongside students fully immersed within the study. In my experience, responding to the needs of the individual became easier outside of the curriculum and this is something that will be addressed under the theme the Art of Communication.

Concepts of power residing within the place of learning run contrary to traditional frameworks where the teacher is the keeper of knowledge and chooses what knowledge to impart on students, thus creating what Ranciere defines as a deliberately obstructive process. For Ranciere (2010b), “scholarly progression is the art of limiting the transmission of knowledge, of organising delay, of deferring equality” (p.8). This happens because that access to learning is being controlled by the teacher creating dependency. Adams and Owens (2016) assert that, “this disabling of the student, the removal of the belief that the student can learn independently is a key power formulation that is replicated in western state education systems” (p.8). Therefore, all that students are learning is dependence on the teacher and that the power of knowledge lies with the teacher. In my experience, this creation of dependence was something that my students experienced in relation to my curriculum pedagogy. Although not intentional, due to the fact that the work was based on set outcomes, I was under pressure to deliver successful results in terms of grades. The two years art examination course was given less curriculum time than the core subjects of Maths, English and Science, and class sizes were large. Working in this climate, I had become conditioned to working in a formulaic manner that guaranteed results. This is indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments’ educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016).

Dewey (1916), suggests the role of the teacher is not to impose authority, as students have sufficient understanding of the rules to know they are for the good of the whole group, and not for personal power. Dewey argues that, “teachers should not enforce control through fear of chaos, because the same arguments are used against democracy itself – so why should education be different to democracy” (p.187-188).

Theoretically, this is an idealist standpoint although it is debatable whether any professional educationalist should want to rule from a position of disciplinary power for fear of chaos. In my experience,

teaching in excess of thirty young people within an art classroom and being under pressure to deliver successful results, I felt I needed to maintain a certain level of authority. This was based on being experienced with teaching students from many different back grounds and using a level of authority to provide a safe, secure learning environment for each individual. In my experience, I have to exert an element of control to ensure that every student feels valued and secure within the classroom space. hooks (2003) argues that democratic education is not something that is confined to the classroom; it is taking place constantly and developing organically. For hooks the aim of supporting democratic education is to ensure that knowledge is available for everyone. hooks (2003) states that, “learning must be understood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety” (p.42) and learning is a holistic interconnected process not something that alienates students. Palmer (as cited in hooks, 2003) argues that education is a deeply reflective human transaction; it is not just about receiving information and eventually finding a job. I concur with the theories of hooks and align with this holistic approach to teaching. However, I also appreciate the need for balance - employing such methods needs to be grounded in experience and cautiously applied within the field of teaching.

Spaces of Resistance and Change

One of the key issues arising out of the data was that the A/R/Tographers, like myself, expressed dissatisfaction working within the confines of the curriculum and needed a place to “chill and make art”. This acted in direct contravention to the tightly led curricula within the culture of the school. This section will now explore democratic models of education focusing on the historical and theoretical routes of a/r/tography. I will begin by examining the concept of a/r/tography and how this term is applied in relation to this a/r/tographic thesis. The

term a/r/tography emerged in the early noughties from a community of artists, researchers and teachers working at the University of British Columbia. It was developed further to understand the art curriculum, in this case in North America as aesthetic text (Bickel, 2006). The influences of Eisner are acknowledged in relation to his work on artsbased research methodologies within art education and I will be examining this in more detail later under the theme The Language of Communication. The term a/r/tography is defined as a form of, "...practice-based research within the arts and education" (Irwin, et al., 2013 p.199). The term has been used to describe the professional practices of educators, artists and researchers working together to make, create and provide new ways of understanding (Irwin, et al., 2013). Irwin (2004) refers to a/r/tography as a research methodology that occurs in the liminal in-between and the slashes in between the words are representation of the borderlands in this arts-based practice of inquiry (Bickel, 2006). A/R/Tography was the name chosen to represent the study group, as like the professionals working together, I would be working with students to explore new ways of understanding. The concept of working between borderlands seemed fitting for a research project designed to exist in the space between curriculum and self-generated art.

Particularly of interest to me as both an art educator and art practitioner was the integration of "theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/ research, teaching/learning, and art/making" (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p. 28). Autonomous ways of working suited the methodological approach I was pursuing within the research project. I was an A/R/Tographer working alongside fellow A/R/Tographers, within a space where symbiotic relationships were occurring between art, narrative and theory. This is what Irwin refers to as a knowing that embraces, "...existence that integrates knowing, doing and making...that desires an aesthetic experience found in an elegance of flow between intellect, feeling and practice" (p.29). This is comparable to the data arising from the study

where multi-disciplinary, artefacts and narratives were constructed alongside each other, and this will be addressed further under the theme The Art of Communication. A/R/Tography is reflexive by nature, as participants are required to engage with narratives arising from a/r/tographic practices (Bickel, 2006). The research was designed for me to be fully immersed within the space with fellow A/R/Tographers, and is reflected in the data arising through the sessions. Taking an a/r/tographic approach to my research involved me facing divisions in my identity as an artist, researcher and teacher (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004 p.105). However, as addressed in the introduction, a/r/tography as a research methodology did not include working alongside students to explore narrative practices arising out of the process of making. I therefore adopted the principles, but wished to examine established democratic learning models where students are given voice and autonomy in the creative process (Pinnegar & Davies, 2007 p.44).

I will now critically examine two established democratic learning models: Room 13 and Reggio Emilia. Room 13 is an arts-based educational model that was established in a Scottish primary school in the early 1990's (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005). Learners are given a designated drop-in-space within the school where they are able to make art engaged in contemporary art practices with an artist-in-residence (Room 13). Room 13 is self-funding and self-regulatory, facilitating democratic principles. Artists-in-residence are employed by the students and they go there to make art that is engaged with contemporary practices. The core beliefs are similar to the democratic art values aforementioned, where freedom and individual expression are respected and, as Souness and Fairley (2005) argue, are essential to the health and wealth of the wider community. According to Danielle Souness (in Souness & Fairley, 2005), a former Room 13 student, this alternative place, "teaches us how to think, it treats our ideas, our dreams and thoughts seriously and, perhaps even more importantly, it allows us to find a way of expressing them" (p.44).

Through implementation of this model, pupil autonomy and management have become the dominant model (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005). Room 13 is an artist-teacher and artist-learner model that challenges tightly governed curricula and regulated pedagogies (Adams, 2010). Room 13 (2012) describes itself as an, international community of creative local groups in association with primary schools, acting as drop in arts centres. In some cases, Room 13 can be given such priority that students may temporarily suspend other studies (Adams, 2013). Room 13 practices vary greatly in relation to the specific cultural context, but all prioritise students voice and direction in relation to the art. What is interesting is how Room 13 has been able to grow and flourish within the culture of the school setting. The value of a democratic making space has been recognised by equal emphasis being given to what is occurring both inside and outside of the curriculum. The findings indicate that this level of pupil autonomy was possible to facilitate and nurture within the A/R/Tography space and this will be dealt with in the findings chapter. However in my experience, such a model of learning was unable to exist as part of the curriculum framework due to imposed school constraints, targets and funding.

According to Adams (2010), practices such as Room 13 challenge assumptions about learner agency, the outcomes of the learning process and the concepts of assessable outcomes. Adams suggests that distinctions are blurred between individual and collaborative production; this is problematic for schools and teachers in relation to the question of learner agency, choice and risk. This is particularly pertinent to the aims of this study that in my experience, run contrary to the current political climate where neoliberal economics have resulted in education being viewed as competitive, performative and individualistic (Adams, 2018). Adams (2013) makes comparisons with the Italian Reggio Emilia approach, in that students have autonomy over themselves and their work. The artists in residence in Room 13 consider themselves to be co-practitioners with the students. This is important

because it exists in contravention to what I have seen occur within the traditional art classroom where the emphasis is on measuring individual pupil progress and outcomes and the teacher being placed in charge.

The Reggio Emilia Approach is an Italian educational philosophy based on the premise that individuals learn and develop through their relationships with others (Author Unknown, 2018). The Reggio Emilia pedagogy is against pre-defined curricula and takes a flexible approach to learning where modifications and changes of direction are made as work progresses. The work develops and flows in many directions, challenging the more traditional, linear form of knowledge progression and acquisition, so the work produced is spontaneous and in the moment. Vecchi (2010) argues that a word for this approach is not easy to define in English. Although *emergent curriculum* is near, this does not encapsulate the *otherness* of Reggio and it is therefore referred to as the Italian word *progettazione* (Vecchi, 2010 p.13). Vecchi (2010) states that importance is placed on the aesthetic dimension to education and learning. This aesthetic dimension is defined as, "...A process of empathy relating to the self to things and things to each other" (p.5).

The Reggio Emilia model of independent learning has an international reputation for its pedagogical work and centres around the world, acknowledge the influence of Reggio's pedagogy (Vecchi, 2010, p.12). This is explored by Vecchi (2010) in particular the models of contribution of art and creativity to early education in Reggio preschools. Vecchi examines the role of the *atelier* (an arts workshop in a school) and the role of the *atelierista* (a person with an arts background), in supporting and developing visual language as part of the knowledge building process. The role of the *atelierista* is strongly supported through relationships with teachers, pedagogues and specific activities. Similarities can be drawn here to Room 13, which is defined as, "a meritocracy that places literacy the ability to think and the skills of visual expression at its heart" (Souness & Fairley, 2005 p.46). The

theory underlying Reggio pedagogy is defined by Dahlberg, Ross, and Pence (1999) as a, "... co-construction of knowledge and identity and opening up new possibilities for democracy ...Thinking critically makes it possible to unmask and free ourselves from existing discourses, concepts and constructions, and to move on by producing different ones" (p. 79). Pupil autonomy and management are the dominant model for such practices as can be found in Room 13 and Reggio Emilia. Both are successful models of democratic education, and in particular, Room 13 has developed both nationally and internationally (Adams, 2005; Atkinson & Dash, 2005). Although established and flourishing on a global scale, in my experience, this model was not transferring into mainstream secondary art and design education and was not familiar to educators outside of the academic community.

It was necessary for me to employ a research methodology that would exist as a democratic research space between accepted notions of democratic learning spaces such as Room 13 and Reggio Emilia, as well as the theoretical in-betweenness of a/r/tography (Irwin, 2004). Wilson (2003) offers a solution to this dilemma by identifying three visual culture sites of pedagogy: the art classroom, the pedagogical visual culture site constructed by children and youth, and the space between school and self-initiated art. Wilson argues that these sites have been constructed in response to the post-modern turn and the rise of digital culture through the proliferation of images saturating our society, through use of the internet, video installation and other forms of new media. Wilson (2003) asks the question, "...In our postmodern era, is it possible that in art education, as in the art world, the borders between high and low might also disappear?" (p.110). In my experience the fixation on high quality outcomes within the curriculum is symptomatic of the current political climate where neoliberal economics have impacted on education being perceived as based around competition and performance based (Adams, 2018). There is little room within this

model of education for anything but high quality outcomes even in the face of the post-modern era.

Wilson argues that this, "...democratization of images" (p.121) is impossible to diagram within a conventional art educational context and I would be inclined to agree for reasons aforesaid. However, within the A/R/Tography space, a/r/tographic practices enabled boundaries to be blurred between perceptions of the quality of outcomes, and focus on process and narrative (Irwin, 2004). I will now seek to examine each pedagogical site proposed by Wilson (2003) separately, then collectively. In my experience, the A/R/Tography space had become a site where all three visual culture sites defined by Wilson had become blurred and were working together in an a/r/tographic manner (Irwin, 2003).

Pedagogical visual culture is defined by Wilson (2003) as a network of relationships consisting of teachers and their interests and students and their interests. Wilson (2003), suggests art educators need to rethink pre-existing orderly teaching strategies to support the rise of this visual culture. For Wilson, art teaching and visual cultural pedagogy are two very different entities. Visual cultural pedagogy for Wilson is a site, where there is a network of relationships. Similarities can be found here with the Room 13 model of learning. This would suggest a more democratic framework where the emphasis is on the exchanging of knowledge and ideas, a creative space open to interpretation and discussion. This theory is of importance as it is pertinent to the aims of the study. Adams and Owens (2016) state, "that the former is associated with elitism and notions of the exceptional and gifted", which are notions that they reject, arguing this has no place in their conception of democracy or education (p.6). Wilson argues that the kind of direct imagery that results from these sites is the opposite to the ethos of visual cultural pedagogy, in that students have a choice in determining what they do and how they do it. In my experience of teaching art within the curriculum framework, there is a disparity between the art created

in the school environment and students selfgenerated art. The A/R/Tography space became a site where visual culture could be revealed and explored; I will return to this in the findings and analysis chapter.

The pedagogical visual culture site, constructed by children and youth is defined by Wilson (2003) as a place where young people make art independently, "... privately to please themselves...first, and perhaps most importantly, they are made because young people wish to make them. These non-obligatory artworks of visual culture are almost always directed toward the production of narratives" (p.118). Wilson argues that this pedagogical visual culture site provides agency and selfknowledge, allowing young people to experiment symbolically with identity and, "...the kinds of selves they might become, with their futures, with the realities of the worlds in which they live, and to test the consequences of following or not following society's rules, norms, and laws" (p.118). Wilson argues that this type of art is not given place within the curriculum framework and teachers have a duty to know about students' self-initiated art. He believes that such art is a gateway into students' dreams and their aspirations, allowing the teacher to fully understand the whole being of the students. Wilson goes further to argue that for some students these sites are more meaningful than what is going on within the classroom. I concur with Wilson and this theory is important as in my experience working with the A/R/Tographers, there was a desire to reveal self-generated art; this will be addressed further in the findings chapter.

Arguably, the third site, namely - a space between the school and the self- initiated visual cultural sites students construct themselves is more difficult to define or evidence. A/R/Tography became such as space but its existence would have been problematic within the confines of the curriculum. An example of the creation of such a site that Wilson gives is when students were asked to create a comic strip story within the art

classroom. As the same could not be justified to form part of curriculum time, the students were set the task as homework. Wilson argues that this narrative drawing activity took place, "...in a site that exists between the school site and self-initiated visual cultural sites" (p.121). As the project had been set as homework, the students felt obliged to complete the assignment, but Wilson argues they also had the freedom to include referents from a proliferation of images from visual culture that would not normally have been generated from within the confines of the classroom. Wilson argues that if the drawings had been created within the school environment they might have been viewed as inappropriate by the teacher. This theory is important, because in my experience, controversial issues affecting young peoples lives such as drugs and body image, have been explored by students within the confines of the curriculum. Some of these have been censored and questioned as to their appropriateness for a school environment. However, the A/R/Tography space afforded such self initiated art to be revealed and this will be explored further in the findings chapter.

Atkinson (2018) proposes that there is a significant relationship between art, democracy and education and that art enables "political subjectification", disrupting normal societal roles (p.12). In my experience as an art practitioner art does have the power to challenge. However, this potential is not realised within the confines of the classroom where quality outcomes are prioritised over process. For Wilson (2003), the "delightful disorder" of students work is something that cannot and should not be tamed within the confines of the classroom (p.120). As a potential way forward, Wilson tells us that, "... students' should pursue their own interests. Even in the formal art classroom where the teacher proposes the images that students should create and study, students must always be permitted to place their own images and their own ideas alongside teachers' choices" (p.122).

The A/R/Tography space facilitated and encouraged the creation of such art without fear of outcomes being measured by their value, therefore removing inhibitors to creativity. Wilson goes further to argue that by coercing students to do something they have not chosen to do themselves, teachers can destroy their interest. In my experience, through observation I have perceived a marked difference in how students approach drawing as they move from the lower end of the school into their examination years. Lower down the school students approach drawing free of inhibition and are likely to share self-generated art within the school setting. However, as they become young adults, producing art inside the examination curriculum framework, they appear to be more conscious and critical of their draughtsmanship when creating mimetic observations of the world around them.

Adams and Owens (2016) observe that adults working in the Room 13 environment

...encounter the perennial problem of children's loss of confidence and disillusionment with their drawing ability, a culturally dominant trend in the UK, frequently accompanied by the proclamation: 'I can't draw'. In Room 13 this has become known as 'going blind', and workarounds have to be found, a scenario familiar to many mainstream art educators (p.74).

In my experience, A/R/Tography provided a space where students could work without inhibition, free from curriculum constraints and without fear of judgment. The "delightful disorder" (p.110) that Wilson refers to could be likened to the idea of disobedience as explored by Atkinson (2018). Atkinson argues that disobedience is a pre-requisite for learning even if it is in the confines of a traditional lesson. Atkinson perceives art as a disobedient force in the context of education that can enable release, in turn fracturing the, "parameters of instruction and pedagogic

work” (p.157). There are similarities to the theories of Wilson (2003) regarding the creation of democratic learning spaces. Atkinson (2018) refers to the lack of freedom within the curriculum framework as, “pedagogised subjectivities...produced through the power of established practices such as assessment, practice methodologies, examination and inspection” (p.158). To disrupt these established frameworks, he argues that art has a “forcework” (p.158) that ruptures the regulative power of established aesthetic and education criterion. Atkinson (2018) claims that disobedience fractures pedagogical barriers, challenging both the individual’s way of knowing and the established forms of knowledge (p.194). Once these disobedient pedagogies open up, a place is created for new possibilities for practice to develop together with new ways of understanding. Although I agree with Atkinson in principle regarding freedom of expression and disobedience, implementation of the same would be problematic when regulated by external factors within the educational establishment. However, being able to respond, “...to the specific rhythms of each learner’s practice” (Atkinson, 2018 p.203), is something that as an educator I have been able to do outside of the confines of the curriculum and this will be addressed further in the chapter Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching.

The Art of Communication

Central to this thesis is the exploration of relationships that develop within informal making spaces through creative practices. The needs and the voices of the A/R/Tographers have been placed at the heart of this study and it is therefore important to investigate communication within such a setting. Communication will be examined in both a traditional and contemporary context. I begin by exploring the work of Cazden (2001) and Bernstein (1966; 1971) to historically contextualise how dialogue has been analysed through the use of linguistics in

education. Communication is then theoretically explored through the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005) and hooks (2003), examining their philosophies surrounding conscious teaching. This is an A/R/Tographic thesis with its routes situated in visual research methodologies. A/R/Tography is reflexive by nature, as participants are required to engage with narratives arising from creative a/r/tographic practices (Bickell, 2006). Therefore the relationship between making and relationships is explored through verbal and nonverbal narratives, these are examined as a form of communication. I have used the theorists of Miller (2005), Eisner (1991, 1997, 2002) and Bourriaud (2002) in order to examine the data.

Cazden (2001) investigates classroom discourse within the framework of applied linguistics. Her work explores how patterns of language use affect knowledge and learning in the classroom and how these relationships affect the equality of learning opportunities. When discussing the characteristics of narratives between student and educator, Cazden suggests that the educator inadvertently takes control of the students language to, "...shape it into patterns of their own culture or world view" (p.15). Cazden further argues that the continuum of responses given by a teacher; ranging from the positive to the negative, is related to cross-cultural communication difficulties, suggesting that teachers are more likely to give negative responses to students who are culturally different from them. Cazden suggests that this is not because student language is less complex, but rather that discourse styles are different to the teachers' own. In my experience, as the research project was designed as a democratic learning space where there was no teacher agenda, the discourse between participant and educator was not structured in such a way. Indeed in the introduction to the second edition of this text, Cazden acknowledges that educators are being asked to stop relying on the traditional three part pattern of lessons, –

“Initiation/Response/Evaluation” – IRE that is used to impart knowledge in classroom discourse (p.5). Discourse within the A/R/Tography space was less structured and more democratic in nature, developing organically alongside each other and the work. This will be discussed in more detail in the findings chapter.

My positionality within the space was aligned with the research of Jeffs and Smith (2005), who argue that although the educator is the instigator and has overall control, they are still directing and need expertise to read the dynamics of the group. As the artist teacher in the room, it fell to me to use my professional judgment as to how to direct or steer conversations. Jeffs and Smith (2005) recognise this and make the point that as educators we need to negotiate this field of learning, “...When the talk begins, when to be active and when to be inactive; when to be quiet and when to talk; how to encourage and sustain conversation; and how best to include the shy and manage the overly garrulous” (p.38). Cazden (2001) concurs with this view, signifying that in her experience, improvisation is an integral element of an educators’ pedagogy when engaging with students. However, she goes further to suggest that, “where the researcher sees order...I often felt impending chaos” (p.44).

Although using improvisation methods within teaching parallels the research of Vechhi (2010); Jeffs and Smith (2005) and hooks (2010), I would argue that the “chaos” Cazden refers to is the improvisation diverting away from traditional planned lessons when employing democratic learning methods such as those implemented by myself within the A/R/Tography space. Cazden (2001) acknowledges the importance of student interaction and narrative by sharing what she refers to as *cognitive load*. Therefore, group discourse arising from classroom discussion becomes empowering and allows dialogue to become exploratory. hooks (2010) goes further to advocate the art of conversation in order that learners can, “...name their fears, voice their resistance to thinking and speak out” (p.22). Therefore using discourse

as a vehicle for democracy within the learning environment. I align with implementing this form of intuitive form of pedagogy both inside and outside of the curriculum framework.

Like Cazden (2001) and her theories on how educators subconsciously use linguistics to shape the culture of students learning (p.15), the work of Bernstein (1971) is primarily concerned with sociolinguistics in relation to social factors. It is important to consider his work, as the A/R/Tographers who chose to take part in the study were identified as coming from a range of diverse social backgrounds. The data elicited by Ofsted (2015), demonstrated that the students who were in the minority within mainstream education at the school were in the majority within the A/R/Tography space. It is important that this is examined in terms of sociolinguistics. Bernstein (1971) argues that through the use of elaborated and restricted codes, language is used as a social constraint. Bernstein (1966) argues, “Different forms of social relations can generate different speech-systems or linguistic codes” (p.254). Similarities can be found with the issues of power, equality and authority within the classroom as addressed by Ranciere (2010b). Therefore, the speech-system is a product of the social structure (p.254). Bernstein goes further to suggest that individuals learn their roles through the process of communication and subordinate their behaviour accordingly.

Bernstein tells us, “...it is through specific linguistic codes that relevance is created, experience given a particular form, and social identity constrained” (p.255). However, my research is not concerned with the linguistic element of social constraints; it is more rooted in the theories of Bourdieu (1993) and his concept of Habitus, where individuals become subconsciously trapped within their own cultural field.

Bourdieu's theories will be discussed in further detail under the theme of Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching. The narratives that arose within the research are more aligned with Vecchi (2010), who highlights

the importance of not creating hierarchies and barriers between languages, and that as educators we must gain an understanding of the richness that arises from this process. Similarities can be found here with the work of Jeffs and Smith (2005) and hooks (2003) and their theories on conscious teaching, a methodology I endeavoured to employ through the A/R/Tography space.

Jeffs and Smith (2005) argue that democracy is fostered through conversations. I concur, as in my experience the A/R/Tography space allowed for more freedom of speech on a personal level.

A/R/Tographers had a space in which to discuss a range of topics that directly affected their own lives. An example of this would be when working alongside A/R/Tographers, natural discourse and dialogue occurred within topics of conversation, ranging from bereavement to family relationships. A/R/Tographers brought to these conversations their own viewpoints and personal experiences. hooks (2003) recognises the importance of fostering conversation both inside and outside of the school environment. hooks goes further to discuss how learning can be shared through different modes of speech. hooks (2003) argues that vernacular speech is seldom used in education and urges educators to employ this mode of dialogue within the learning setting. This is important as within the A/R/Tography space vernacular speech and nicknames were used, disrupting traditional hierarchical roles, and this will be explored in more detail in the findings chapter. Leslie and Skipper (1990) make the link with the constraints associated with name association, asserting that, "Bureaucratisation has fostered the idea that positions are more important than the people who occupy them" (p.275).

This implies that the more formally a person is addressed, the higher in social status that person is perceived to be. Leslie and Skipper (1990) suggest that the language used emerges as a reaction to understanding of the social setting. Leslie and Skipper go further to argue, "...we construct a sense of nickname through social negotiation" (p.279). They

suggest that the concept of a nickname may be meaningless to someone who was not aware of the context in which it was acquired, such as the social process of how the person achieved the nickname. In relation to my identity, this would relate to how I acquired the nickname of *Bennett* within the A/R/Tography setting. This is comparable with Leslie and Skippers assertion that the type of name used is based on the social situation (p.278). Leslie and Skipper propose that nicknames are used as a process of social action and that names are not just arbitrary symbols, they signify status and meaningful social organisation (p.273). For hooks, “Diversity in speech and presence can be fully appreciated as a resource enhancing any learning experience” (p.45). hooks (2010) makes the point that everybody always remembers a good conversation, which can go back and forth, helping to shape and formulate ideas. Therefore, meaningful conversations occur when learners are in a comfortable environment. The importance of conversation is central to the work of Jeffs and Smith (2005) who argue that that all too often professionals can trivialise the process that contributes to the wellbeing and happiness of students. This argument is something which has been central to the research project - together with identifying the human need to share concerns and interests (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). This resonates strongly with the data found and will be returned to in the analysis chapter.

For Jeffs and Smith, “All conversations have within them some possibility for learning and change” (p.34). Therefore, it is important that the facilitator does not impose their own agenda on these conversations and values the contributions made by each member of the group. Conversely, the research of Ranciere (2010b) asserts that the teacher is seen as the keeper of knowledge and the explicator. I concur with Jeffs and Smith as in my experience, communication within the A/R/Tography space was not just about dialogue, but also communicating through the process of listening. Miller (2005) proposes, “Good teachers are also good listeners – listening not only to

the words being spoken but also to the silent messages that their students send” (p.30). Vecchi (2010) acknowledges that in an educational project, “... listening is a difficult but indispensable practice that must be learnt” (p.13). hooks (2010) speaks of the importance of actively listening to arguing that this helps students to find their voice, to actively empower the individual, but also become dynamically engaged so the teacher is no longer the leader. This is what hooks (2010) refers to as a “co-operative of learning” (p.22) and was exemplified through the informal making space of the A/R/Tography Collective.

In my experience, by taking the time to listen and talk with students outside of the classroom in an informal setting, the relationship between student and teacher begins to transform into a more democratic space. Opinions and viewpoints can be shared without fear of judgement. Jeffs and Smith (2005) argue that there is an etiquette involved – subliminal rules of socialising knowing that the right rules for one group are not necessarily the right rules for another. This is key within the theories of Jeffs and Smith, and something, that in my experience gets lost within day-to-day teaching. Vecchi (2010) suggests that there is an aesthetic tension with its emphasis on connectivity and searching for relations and structures, which supports the listening process. Similarities can be found here with the theories of Bourriaud (2002). Vecchi (2010) argues the external reality that students bring into school needs to be consciously considered when deciding on the knowledge schools intend to promote to support students. Therefore, the reality of school and the children’s external reality work together to form a symbiotic relationship of learning and discovery. Jeffs and Smith, (2005) talk of human beings as sentient creatures who assemble meaning through sensory experience. They argue that learning opportunities should be directed by whatever issues people bring with them; working with these issues is an important part of their work. For Jeffs and Smith (2005) it

is essential that the educator contains, "... the impulse to always be the provider" (p.55) and this will be explored further in the findings chapter.

Together with arising narratives, there was a myriad of non-verbal signals occurring through the use of body language arising within the A/R/Tography setting. These non-verbal signs occurred through the A/R/Tographers interactions with each other, interactions within the space and interactions through the process of making. Miller (2005) asserts that within the classroom, teacher and students are consciously and subconsciously sending out nonverbal cues several hundred times a day (p.28). Miller argues that it is imperative that teachers are able to read such signals in order to reciprocate positively, rather than negative signals that may impede on effective communication. Miller suggests that, "The most effective communication occurs when verbal and non verbal messages are in sync, creating communication synergy" (p.28). Therefore, both student and teacher are working together to form a symbiotic relationship. Miller (2005) further argues that words have limitations, and that not only are non-verbal signals more powerful, but are also more genuine. Miller asserts that sometimes another form of communication channel is necessary to assist in the transmission of complex messages. For Miller (2005), "Body movements alone have no exact meaning, they can support or reject the spoken word" (p.29). Although I agree that both the spoken word and body language can symbiotically work together to reinforce positive messages, in my experience, body language on its own can be used as a powerful communicator, and forms an integral part of my teaching practice. I employ methods of physical contact in my pedagogy; negotiating boundaries with the occasional touch to the shoulder of a student to convey reassurance, and positive affirmations with hand gesticulations to inspire confidence.

hooks (1994) argues that there is a disparity between the intellectual mind and the action of the body. Traditionally intellectuals have been

static behind a desk, however, there is also the teaching space to negotiate. For hooks, erasure of the body means erasure of difference, in her case class difference. Arguably there is a symbiotic relationship between intellect and body within the confines of the class. In my experience, it is important to move around the teaching space and individually engage students in conversation about their work to help remove barriers for learning. Miller (2005) argues that creating a supportive learning environment necessitates not sending messages of rejection through the use of personal space. It is important that it is an open process where students and teachers are able to send and process both verbal and non-verbal cues accurately.

Vecchi (2010) speaks about the high importance Reggio Emilia places on language. Language is not just about talking, it is something, which goes beyond the verbal, transforming into different ways that human beings express themselves. In this particular case, importance is placed on the visual articulation of language. Vecchi (2010) states, “When we speak of languages we refer to the different ways children (human beings) represent, communicate and express their thinking in different media and symbolic systems; languages, therefore, are the many fonts or geneses of knowledge” (p.9). In the case of the A/R/Tography Collective, making was used as a democratic learning practice to bridge the gap between communication, curriculum and personal art, within the school environment.

Articulating Physical Narratives

This is an a/r/tographic thesis with its routes situated in visual research methodologies. A/R/Tography is reflexive by nature, as participants are required to engage with narratives arising from a/r/tographic practices (Bickel, 2006). Central to this research is relational art which is defined

by Bourriaud (2002) as, “A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (p.113). In my experience, the artwork created through the research project was very much shared within the group setting and invariably had an accompanying narrative that prompted dialogue from both the creator and fellow A/R/Tographers’. This aligns with the theories of Bourriaud (2002), who suggests that a successful piece of art will open dialogue and discussion in the form of inter-human negotiation (p.41). Parallels can be drawn here with the a/r/tographic concept of, “theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/ research, teaching/learning, and art/making” (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p. 28). Autonomous ways of working suited the methodological approach I was pursuing within the research project. Bourriaud (2002) argues that relational artwork can only be created within social relationships.

Bourriaud likens this form of artistic activity to a game whose functions, forms and patterns evolve in accordance with the social context (p.11). Bourriaud goes further to suggest that the role of artworks is not to create imagined realities but to, “...be ways of living and models of action within the existing real” (p.13). This is comparable to what occurred within the social context of the A/R/Tography group through the process of making. I was an A/R/Tographer working alongside fellow A/R/Tographers within a space where symbiotic relationships were occurring between art, narrative and theory. This is what Irwin (2004) refers to as a knowing that embraces, “...existence that integrates knowing, doing and making...that desires an aesthetic experience found in an elegance of flow between intellect, feeling and practice” (p.29). Bourriaud (2002) suggests that relational art creates a disruption, which can, “...record tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life” (p.17). Parallels can be drawn with the theories of Atkinson (2018) who perceives art as a disobedient force in the context of education that

can enable release, in turn fracturing the “parameters of instruction and pedagogic work” (p.157).

The research engages with narrative and process-based responses to the creation of art. Adams and Owens (2016) argue, “This is more than saying that practice encompasses thinking before the act; it is to suggest that the practice is indistinguishable from either thinking or from material production; it paradoxically precedes an idea as it is simultaneously the result of one” (p.3). Therefore, there is the idea that symbiotic relationships are created between the sensory, intellectual and the process of making. Adams and Owens further suggest that to practice any art is to pay attention to one’s agency and being in the world (p.63). Eisner (1991) identifies this as the transactive account, that is the way that humans negotiate a meaningful space for themselves between the subjective and objective divide. The concept of knowledge being generated through the process of making is something that has occurred within the A/R/Tography space. Multi-disciplinary connections were being made through making both individually and collectively (Irwin, 2004).

Vecchi (2010) argues that the aesthetic dimension raises an awareness of the world and the quality of relationships with the surrounding social sphere. The Reggio process is not just about the final outcome but the act of “doing” (p.5), something that is not easy to define. Vecchi argues that it is the teachers’ responsibility to promote the relationships that children have with the things around them and what they are doing.

This process cannot be hurried and needs to be fostered and nurtured. As I experienced with the curriculum framework, Vecchi (2010) asserts that traditional education is rigid and unchanging, leaving no element for doubt or uncertainty. Vecchi argues that schools do not take into account the aesthetic dimension to education, which is key to the work of the *atelierisa*. In my experience, the learning processes that took place through the process of making were not dependent on final outcome, they were of equal importance and on some occasions even

more so than final outcomes. Dewey (1938) and Eisner (1991) suggest that this sensory interaction creates meaning and Eisner likens the process to the connections between art and play. Eisner (1991) concurs with Wilson (2003) that the arts can be used to help students learn and decode values and ideas that are embedded within popular culture. He goes further to suggest that images can be read like text to help students make sense of the world around them. Eisner argues that the arts enable students to formulate experiences into speech and text – its linguistic counterpart, namely synaesthesia.

Therefore, when students are engaging with materials, the experience comes to have a “feelingful quality” (p.87). Eisner (1991), argues that the arts play a part in transforming consciousness. Eisner tells us that art related forms of thinking, “...celebrate the consummatory, noninstrumental aspects of human experience and provide the means through which meanings that are ineffable, but feelingful can be expressed” (p.19). Adams (2011) concurs arguing that art has the ability to foster a degree of student awareness of, “how their subjectivity as learners is constructed” (p.216) and by revealing this process, learners can continually renegotiate the space between themselves as artists and learners (p.216). The process of the renegotiation of roles is something that occurred within the A/R/Tography space, and I will seek to examine this under the theme Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching.

Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching

Identity

The subject of this thesis was prompted by my own crisis of identity as both an artist and educator. As an artist educator, I felt that my pedagogy was lacking a more democratic, holistic approach to teaching. I was keen to explore relationships that arose in informal making spaces

where I would work as an art practitioner alongside students. My own art practice explores autobiographical and issue based art and I was keen to afford students the opportunity to experiment with contemporary models of art practice. The creation of the A/R/Tography Collective and identifying within the culture of A/R/Tography, enabled me to explore my identity within the space. Furthermore, the cultural space also afforded individuals the opportunity to explore and reveal their own identities. In order to explore issues of identity in relation to this A/R/Tographic thesis, I now examine the theories of Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1993; 2010) and his concept of habitus. This theory is important as it seeks to understand the context of why it was important to me as an artist practitioner and educator to afford students democracy and freedom within the culture of the A/R/Tography space.

Habitus is defined by Bourdieu (1993) as

...that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history...that is belongs to a genetic mode of thought (p.86).

Bourdieu (1993) proposes that these dispositions are acquired in the formative years of an individual's upbringing and are very much linked to social experiences formulated in childhood. Therefore, individuals bring their own system of cultural beliefs, their own *habitus* with them to various social situations. In my experience as an artist practitioner, I explore autobiographical matters in particular family relationships. In a Bourdieuan sense, this has impacted on me as an individual, and in turn both my art and teaching practice. According to Bourdieu (1984), such experiences are, "...invisible relationships...obscured by the realities of ordinary sense experience" (p.22). Bourdieu is therefore

suggesting that we are all a product of our individual histories and bring pre-conceptions and life experiences with us when dealing with external matters. Grenfell (2008) asserts that for Bourdieu, "...primary socialization in the family ...is deeply formative" (p.58). Therefore, although our habitus is being continually shaped by on-going contexts, pre-existing dispositions we have formulated in childhood are long held and something that we bring with us into the social world around us.

This is referred to as the relationship between habitus and field. The field being the social context in which the subjective experience of the individual is applied (Bourdieu, 1990c). When observing the A/R/Tographers, I related the phenomena occurring to the structural code of my lived experiences (Bourdieu, 2010). In turn, the A/R/Tographers' enact their structural code of lived experiences within the space. The phenomena arising out of the culture of the A/R/Tography space is indicative that this indeed was the case for both myself and the A/R/Tographers. This will be explored further in the findings chapter.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that through the concept of habitus we learn, "Our rightful place in the social world, where we will do best given our dispositions and resources, and also where we will struggle (p.471).

This suggests that habitus could be inhibitive because we naturally gravitate towards social fields in which we feel comfortable. In the work *Inheritors and Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1979b; 1979a), examine how stimuli during upbringing shapes outlooks, beliefs and practices of actors, and how this impacts on their educational careers. It was ascertained that middle class actors were more likely than those from working class backgrounds to go to university. Bourdieu argues that it was the actors' relegation of themselves out of the system through their habitus, rather than the educational system blocking access to higher education. In my experience, this theory is important as it strongly resonates with the data arising from the research and the

narratives arising out of the informal making space. This will be addressed in further detail in the findings chapter.

The concept of habitus is based round the assumption that individuals believe that they are free agents making decisions of their own free will. However as discussed, formulations of habitus in childhood can become sociological constraints. Bourdieu (2010) argues that habitus is not only a, “structuring structure” (p166), but a structure which has created divisions by social class. Bourdieu (2000) writes, “Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games are not “fair games”. Without being, strictly speaking, rigged the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations” (p.214-215). Therefore for Bourdieu, our expectations are conditioned by our habitus and are an, “arbitrary form of social structure” (p.29). This theory is important, as it is pertinent to the social composition of how students are perceived in relation to the culture of the school as addressed in the methodologies chapter. In order to negotiate this sociological constraint Grenfell (2003) urges us to ask why people are, “... thinking and acting the way that they do and how do these actions impact on social reproduction and change” (p.58).

In my experience as both an educator and artist, I am accustomed to reflecting on my professional pedagogy and art practice. Through the process of reflection, I contemplate events that have unfolded through both my teaching and my actions in order that I may improve the same. As highlighted in the chapter Research Methodologies, I consider reflexivity to be the most autonomous research methodology to employ for this qualitative study, and I have employed this when considering the sociological constraints of habitus. Grenfell (2003) asserts that Bourdieu wishes to reveal the hidden workings of habitus as a form of *socioanalysis*, enabling people to see their place in the social world (p.58). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992a) assert that the task of the individual, “...is to produce, if not a ‘new person’, than at least a ‘new gaze’, a sociological eye. And this cannot be done without a genuine

conversation, a *metanoia*, a mental revolution, a transformation of one's whole vision of the social world" (p.251). Therefore, rather than viewing the concept of habitus as prohibitive, by employing a narrative, reflective approach to my research, I attempted to view my cultural field not as an inhibitor to my studies but as a sociological gaze to help me reflect on the occurring phenomena. I have endeavoured to employ this method when reflecting and scrutinising the data in the findings and analysis chapter.

Cultural Identity

I have explored the theories of Bourdieu and his theories of habitus. I now wish to examine the links between identity and culture through the literature of Dash (2006; 2007; 2010; 2015). Dash (2010) writes from an English, African Caribbean perspective writing from a position of cultural marginalisation. The A/R/Tography group worked on the periphery of the culture of school to create a space where students from different backgrounds came together; this is pertinent to the literature. Dash (2010) argues that educators need to acknowledge and recognise the existence of, "fusions and boundary crossing that undergird all human life" (p.123). He calls for pedagogues to recognise the constantly recreated diasporic influences within our culture and, through the art curriculum, reveal to students their place within society. Comparisons can be drawn here with Bourdieu's theory of habitus and social field. The diaspora in the case of the A/R/Tography group relating to each individual's social field (Bourdieu 2000a), and how that in order to negotiate this sociological constraint the A/R/Tographers learnt to transform our sociological gaze (Grenfell, 2003).

Adams and Owens (2016); Atkinson (2018) and Bourriaud (2002) concur with Dash, asserting that art has the ability to facilitate diversity and disrupt societal norms. Similarities can be found here with the

reassertion and re-formation of identities that occurred within the A/R/Tography setting. This will be discussed further in the findings chapter. Dash, (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) argues that art education can become a site for social reconstruction where students become active agents in challenging traditional Western hegemonic traditions, thus acknowledging and appreciating 'socio-cultural diversity'. Adams and Owens (2016) support this view, claiming that the field of contemporary art has opened up spaces of social engagement and the whole field of the artist is characterised by diversity, "...in part as a manifestation of social media and globalisation" (p.12).

At the centre of this thesis is the exploration of relationships that develop within informal making spaces through creative practices. The needs and the voices of the A/R/Tographers have been placed at the heart of this study. These theories are important as, in my experience, by employing such teaching methodologies within the classroom, the fluctuation and diversity in society is not only acknowledged but celebrated. hooks (2010) refers to this as a "co-operative of learning" (p.22). The A/R/Tographers taking part in the research project were self-selecting and created what Jeffs and Smith (2005) would refer to as a "Culturally Specific" group in which to work alongside each other, talk and listen (p.30). This aligns with the definition of a/r/tography occurring in the liminal in-between (Bickel, 2006). hooks (2003) discusses the possibility of a learning community in an environment where difference and intimacy form a symbiotic relationship. Such informal spaces could act as enablers against the curriculum and allow risks to be taken both socially and with art work that simply could not be allowed to happen within curriculum time.

Dash (2006b) calls for art education to demonstrate, "through art practices how knowledge is shared and the way in which cultures borrow from and are enhanced by interaction with others" (p.260). Dash goes further to state that it is the role of the teacher to celebrate

difference and nurture the same, aligning with the pedagogical visual culture site proposed by Wilson (2002). In his paper 'Black hair culture, politics and change', Dash (2006a) explores issues of cultural identity and makes links between diasporic people and popular culture. Dash argues that people, "Shut out from mainstream cultural institutions and acculturated to creative modes that privilege personal expressivity, often in collaboration with other oppressed groups, have created new popular languages that are today influential on the way people everywhere assert their subjectivity" (p.34). In my experience, within the culture of the A/R/Tography space, identities were nurtured and then revealed, celebrated rather than marginalised - allowing me to respond to, "...specific rhythms of each learner's practice" (Atkinson, 2018 p.203). Adams and Owens (2016) support this view, claiming that the field of contemporary art has opened up spaces of social engagement and the whole field of the artist is characterised by diversity, "...in part as a manifestation of social media and globalisation" (p.12).

Under the theme Spaces of Resistance and Change, Wilson (2003) argues that pedagogical visual culture sites have been constructed in response to the post-modern turn and the rise of digital culture, through the proliferation of images saturating our society through use of the internet, video installation and other forms of new media. Eisner (1991) concurs with Wilson (2003) that the arts can be used to help students learn and decode values and ideas that are embedded within popular culture. In my experience, this self-generated art did not have the time or a place to flourish within the confines of the curriculum. This presented itself during the course of the study and needs to be contextualised in respect of the literature. In terms of relational art and the emergence of new technologies, Bourriaud (2002), acknowledges peoples collective desire to, "...create new areas of conviviality and introduce new types of transaction to the cultural object. Bourriaud calls this, "Society of the spectacle" where the illusion of interactive democracy is found in truncated channels of communication (p.26).

Comparisons can be drawn here with A/R/Tography which provided a space where identity could be explored through the use of digital culture and the physicality of the A/R/Tography space.

Holistic Teaching

Under the preceding sub-themes, I explored how cultural identity impacts on my artistry and pedagogy. This thesis was prompted by my dissatisfaction with my pedagogy, which I felt was lacking a more democratic, holistic approach to teaching. I now wish to examine in detail the theories of hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) and Jeffs and Smith (2005) and their philosophies regarding conscious teaching, these were my principal guiding beacon throughout the study. In the introduction, I align with Palmer's understanding of education as an ideal I hold central to my pedagogy. Palmer asserts that, "...education is about healing and wholeness...finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world" (Palmer as cited in hooks, 2003, p.43.) By immersing myself within the field of research, the A/R/Tography space afforded me the time to explore and develop my own teaching pedagogy from a position of care and commitment to each individual. I chose to explore the theories of bell hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) and Jeffs and Smith (2005), as like me, fundamentally their theories are informed by personal experience and are reflexive in nature. Their approach to teaching with care and commitment transcends the boundaries of cultures and are ethics I endeavour to adhere to within my own pedagogy. I am aware that teaching from this holistic perspective may be viewed as suspect and ideals not transferable into pedagogy. I therefore explore the theories of Uitto (2012) and Van Manen Li (2002) to address practical concerns regarding their implementation.

Eisner (1991) argues that the impediment to artistry in teaching is that as teachers we become nurtured by a comfortable routine. That is, we acquire ways of doing things, that we know will work; and have

successful and familiar outcomes with the impact being the desired results. Eisner argues that this is symptomatic of the demands of teaching and how it can become an insular process. This is something that occurred within my own pedagogy as I endeavoured to meet the demands of the curriculum. I was becoming unwilling to take what could be perceived as risks within my teaching practice. hooks (1994) argues that students, "...want to see them (the professors) as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge" (p.15). hooks (1994; 2003) writes about democracy and freedom in relation to marginalised groups from a Feminist African American perspective. She argues that dominant essentialist standpoints govern the school and that there is an adversarial culture bred within the classroom environment, where students are pitted against each other in such a way that it can have a dehumanising effect on them. hooks (2010) advocates wholeness where students can be themselves and that engaged pedagogy is the key to free, democratic education. hooks argues for teachers to transgress boundaries so that the classroom can become a, "radical space of possibility" (p.12). hooks (2010) believes that progressive holistic education is the way forward and that within the educational environment there is a reluctance to discuss, "selfactualization" (p.15); for hooks this is linked to excellent teaching. hooks (2010) argues that teachers need to put themselves out there and take risks with engaged pedagogy consisting of mutual participation. She argues that this develops not only the integrity of the student, but also the teacher.

As an art educator, I agree that through constantly developing your pedagogy and challenging both yourself and the students, there is a sense of achievement and reward. However, I would question whether the integrity of the students is improved, as in my experience, trying something new and different can lead to students feeling insecure within art and design lessons, indicative of the performativity culture

within the school. There is an argument that there is a necessity for such practices to be developed outside of the curriculum, in order that students are allowed to explore and experiment free from assessment and constraints. As a researcher I am asking students to take creative risks with their work and push the boundaries with concepts and ideas. Arguably to be seen as authentic, the ability to take risks needs to form part of my practical teaching. Currently these are stand-alone lessons within the school framework rather than the norm. hooks (2003) invites the teacher to move from beyond the classroom into a place of world sharing knowledge.

hooks argues that this skill is vital to maintaining democratic education both inside and outside the classroom; teachers are respected because they respect freedom. Uitto (2012) suggests the disparity between authenticity and pedagogy occurs because there is a cultural expectation on teachers to be role models in both their personal and professional lives (p.294). Therefore, teachers self-regulate themselves and their personal lives to conform to traditional expectations. In my experience of working in the cultural environment of a school, this has been something that has been impressed on my teacher self. Uitto (2012) suggests it is not possible to place boundaries between teacher and students personal lives. Van Manen and Li (2002) argue that teachers have personal involvement in students lives without necessarily recognising the same. Uitto concurs suggesting that teachers personal lives inevitably become visible to students through their values and beliefs. There was a disparity between my artist and teacher identity; the culture of the A/R/Tography group afforded me the opportunity to reveal my *self*. Jeffs and Smith (2005) remind us that the educator must be seen as authentic. They state that, "Effective work must always be based upon students' believing in the truthfulness of the educator" (p.50). Therefore, suggesting that the A/R/Tographers would have to believe in my authenticity as the facilitator in order for A/R/Tography to function as a democratic learning space.

hooks (1994) addresses the problematic nature of teacher identity within the classroom, telling us that by disengaging with academic identity she felt more able to be critical of her own pedagogy. hooks (1994; 2010) highlights the importance of sharing stories so that the onus does not only lie with students to share experiences and confess. Uitto (2012) goes further to suggest that through the sharing of stories students can see their way through a traumatic event (p.296). hooks asserts that by sharing and receiving we become part of a learning community providing a common entry point; telling a story to illustrate critical points which means that ideas are shared with greater openness. hooks shares her own personal stories in a higher educational context to illustrate critical points. In my experience, employing the same strategy of sharing stories with the students about my own life, reveals my humanity therefore enabling them to view me as both a teacher and a person. This is what hooks (1994) refers to as taking a risk within pedagogy. For hooks (2003), optimal learning cannot and will not occur without acknowledgement of the emotional presence and wholeness of students; where learning is about sharing information, listening and hearing individual voices. Uitto (2012) warns of the paradox of being personally present in relationships with students but not too personal and finding the balance between the personal and the professional. I align with hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) who suggests that it is the duty of the educator to know when to talk and when to listen to negotiate this boundary.

Education for me is about healing, wholeness, empowerment and liberation which are ideals I hold central to my pedagogy (Palmer as cited in hooks, 2003). I employ these intuitive, holistic values within my own pedagogical practice. It is important to examine faith and spirituality in a pedagogical sense to contextualise how such values are embedded within holistic teaching. On the subject of spirituality, hooks (2003) argues this is about reclaiming knowing, teaching and learning and moving away from the data logic that disconnects self from the

world. Arguably for hooks, when talking about freedom and democratic education, it is more of a philosophical, spiritual journey where the practical implementation is not always clear. Conversely, teachers are under a lot of pressure to remain impartial to encompass students varying beliefs; that may differ greatly from their own. There is an ethical argument that by impressing views or arguing against a student's belief system, a practitioner is abusing their teacher status. Because of the power imbalance within a student teacher relationship, this could be viewed as an undemocratic pedagogical strategy. Like hooks (2003), Jeffs and Smith (2005) employ qualities that are important to freedom and democracy: happiness, concern, trust, respect, appreciation, affection and hope. Spiritual comparisons are drawn between democracy and associated values, for example the Christian term *fellowship* and how we are all equal. hooks (2003) proposes educators teach with love and observes how it is deemed acceptable to love your subject. However, emotional connections with students can be deemed as suspect. In my experience, the boundaries between student teacher relationships were negotiated and explored within A/R/Tography and I will address this further in the findings chapter. I concur that teachers themselves are unsure how to negotiate emotional boundaries. hooks (2003) argues that the definition of love, "...Care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust" (p131), are the foundations of the teacher pupil relationship although separate from an emotional love. This, hooks (2003) asserts, creates an environment right for optimal learning and sharing knowledge defined as conscious teaching, the foundation of every learning community. Within my pedagogical practice, I employ a holistic approach, incorporating the values of mutual respect, care and concern. This will be discussed in more detail in the findings chapter.

In this chapter I have contextualized specific concepts and themes arising during the course of the research. I have used the questions posed by the study to thematically examine the theoretical field. I have

endeavoured to order this chapter in relation to the data elicited from the study: Democracy and Freedom, Spaces of Resistance and Change, The Art of Communication and Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching. In the next chapter I introduce each A/R/Tographer through the use of a case study and reflective vignettes.

Chapter Three Introduction to A/R/Tographers

In the previous chapter, I provide an examination of the theoretical landscape in which this thesis is situated, guided by the questions posed in the study. The questions are inherently about relationships arising out of informal making spaces. Therefore, the research questions are embedded in and arise from the phenomena that occurred within the A/R/Tography space. Placing the A/R/Tographers at the heart of the study has been paramount throughout the research, as has ensuring that each A/R/Tographer's voice is prioritised and heard. In this section, I provide reflective vignettes written for each A/R/Tographer and have condensed observations and conversations, which occurred over a six-month period. This is then followed by my critical reflections on each particular vignette, interwoven with supporting literature (Al Sadi & Basit, 2017). By taking this approach, I have been able to ensure that each of the A/R/Tographers were represented equally and had the opportunity to have their stories heard, both individually and collectively.

During the course of the research project, as a fellow A/R/Tographer, I was completely immersed in the field of study and, as discussed in the research methodology chapter, the use of case study has enabled me to provide an authentic account of participant experience (Simons, 2009), whilst being as Stake (2006) writes "noninterventive and empathic" (p.12). At the core of this mixed methodological approach is my use of reflexivity. Schon (1991) proposes that the reflexive experience is at the heart of knowing-in action. Therefore, the reflexive research paradigm allows me to stress my involvement, my own lived experiences and what I bring to the research project (Etherington, 2004). Within the content of the vignettes, excerpts in italics refer to my personal reflections written in response to observations. I shall now provide the reader with information regarding the social composition of the research group, together with contextual information on each A/R/Tographer. As

mentioned in the ethics chapter, all six A/R/Tographers who chose to take part in the study are given pseudonyms.

Jake is a fifteen-year-old male, who lives alone with his mother. Jake is eligible for free school meals which indicates that the household income is lower than average. Jake has one sibling who is seven years older than him and no longer lives at home. In terms of the context of the school, Jake is termed as having additional social and emotional needs. Jake has a teaching assistant with him during lessons within curriculum time and attends the schools supportive education department for extra lessons in Maths and English.

Mikey is a fourteen-year-old male, who lives with his father, stepmother and older stepbrother and stepsister. Mikey's birth mother died when he was six and he has been living in a blended family for three years. Mikey's stepmother is a Maths teacher at the school in which the study was undertaken. Mikey has been identified as having difficulty accessing the curriculum and attends the schools supportive education department for extra lessons in Maths and English. He is also able to use the supportive education department for additional help with school work. Both Mikey's stepbrother and stepsister attend the same school. Mikey lives in what could be termed a middle-income family where both his father and his stepmother work full time in professional occupations in the local area.

Alice is a fourteen-year-old female, who lives in the local area with her mother and four younger siblings. Alice comes from a single parent family and is eligible for free school meals, suggesting that the family income is lower than average.

Lenny is a fourteen-year-old female who has chosen to identify as male. Lenny has requested that within the text of the research project that he is referred to as male. Lenny has mixed heritage and lives with his mother who works full-time. Lenny's father resides in Turkey and he is

their only child together, although there are a number of half siblings in Turkey.

Evan is a fifteen-year-old male who comes from an established farming background. Evan has a brother who is four years older than him and intends to work full time on the farm once his compulsory education is complete. Evan has been identified as having additional needs and attends the schools supportive education department. The support has been designed to help Evan with literacy and numeracy and he is given extra time to complete schoolwork within the department.

Tim is a fourteen-year-old male who has been diagnosed with dyspraxia. Tim lives in the local area with his parents and one younger brother who also attends the school. Tim has access to the schools supportive education department due to difficulty accessing the curriculum within the classroom environment and has been identified as having additional needs due to his diagnosis of dyspraxia.

As mentioned previously, the data elicited by Ofsted demonstrates that the students who are perceived to be in the minority within mainstream education within the school, are in the majority within the A/R/Tography space. Over the next six months, I get to know these remarkable young people very well and the stories that follow are both theirs and mine.



Figure 3 *"The Ghost "(2018)*

Jake created this piece of digital art exploring his relationship with the world around him. Jake uses his pre-existing knowledge of Photoshop derived from his G.C.S.E Photography lessons and applies this knowledge within the A/R/Tography space. Jake has chosen to represent himself in luminescent blue situated in a landscape devoid of colour. The image is evocative of my observations that Jake can appear isolated from his peers because of his perceived differences and idiosyncrasies.

Jake

Jake describes himself as a “lone wolf”. A keen photographer, he takes hundreds of pictures of “everything and anything”. Jake is very lively and ricochets around the A/R/Tography space, moving quickly from one group to another. Jake has told me that he is technically minded and working on computers helps him find a way through his dyslexia. “I can do loads on the computer - there is a lot of diversity. You can do anything and it looks good...I enjoy showing my images off. The recognition is important to me and art is a distraction from stress.”

Jake comes to each A/R/Tography session armed with his bridge camera and phone. He starts each session by showing me each of his images. They consist mainly of his niece and pictures of animals taken at the local zoo. Jake has told me that he has a family pass, enabling him to go as often as he pleases. Behind each image, Jake has a story to tell and goes to great lengths and detail to guide me through the images of his family; telling me on numerous occasions how his eldest niece is amazed at his ability with the camera. Jake is very protective of his niece and tells me how he collects her from primary school and looks out for her. Whilst showing me the images, Jake talks about how people in school bully him. He tells me he hates bullies and how he sticks up for people who are being bullied. Jake comes to A/R/Tography because, “...it’s something to do when there is no one at home. I come partially for the art but partially so I am not by myself.”

There has not been one session where Jake hasn’t mentioned his turbulent relationship with his father. His parents separated a year before. I sense that this has affected Jake deeply and the subject is never far from the surface when we speak. As mentioned previously, Jake’s way into conversations appears to be through his use of imagery. As I observe Jake showing other group members his work, I notice how he seems to grow in confidence. Jake appears to seek and need the

validation of others, which he is able to obtain through his ability to digitally manipulate images. Jake's phone seems to be a way in for him; a portal that enables him to initiate conversations. Through speaking with Jake I know that he is extremely proud of his photography work. *I feel that Jake's photography skills give him confidence and a sense of achievement.* I have witnessed how these skills have integrated him with the rest of the group, who appear to accept and understand him.

I know that Jake finds it difficult to relate to fellow students within the school environment. Because of his perceived difference and idiosyncrasies, he has somewhat fractious relationships with his peers. Jake spends his break-times waiting outside the classroom for his next lesson, or having lunch in the supportive education department; a place within school which students who have been identified as vulnerable are allowed to use. Occasionally in A/R/Tography, there will be a fractious incident where Jake will become agitated and argumentative with other members. This was highlighted in an incident where Jake stormed out of the group and told everyone he was not coming back. Evan interjected saying, "Let me deal with this" and followed him outside. They both appeared some five minutes later and Jake was visibly calmer. Later, I took Evan to one side and asked how he had managed to calm Jake down. His reply was that he just listened to Jake vent and when he had finished said; "Are you coming back then?" Jake had silently nodded and followed him back to A/R/Tography.

Sometimes, Jake will bring in cakes to share with the group, which he made in his Food Tech lessons. *I reflect on how Jake uses the cakes as a method to assist him integrate and socialise with the group.* He is an avid fan of music and regularly puts songs on his phone speaker for the group to listen to. Through listening to Jake's song choices, I have come to appreciate his musical tastes and commonalities have been found. As I have got to know Jake through A/R/Tography, I have learnt when to talk, when to listen and when to give Jake space to approach me. As

the sessions have progressed and we have got to know each other better, Jake will greet me with an, "...Alright Bennett!" both inside and outside of A/R/Tography. Outside of lessons, Jake will seek me out, tap me on the shoulder then move out of my line of vision as I turn. He will then appear as I turn back round grinning at me, pleased at the joke. His light-hearted approach to our relationship is positive and welcomed by me.

Having taught Jake within the G.C.S.E art curriculum framework, I am aware that he can struggle within the confines of the lesson. He finds it difficult to relate to the concept of assessment objectives and how these objectives must be met in order to meet the grading criteria. Jake likes to do his own thing and gets frustrated when this freedom of choice is curtailed, or if he feels that he is being restricted and disciplined. Early on in the research project, I tried to engage Jake in a game of Exquisite Corpse. The premise of the game is that each person draws a part of a body without seeing the former in order to create a hybrid creature. I had observed Jake sitting alone texting and felt a compulsion to facilitate drawing. I was informed in no uncertain terms he did not wish to participate despite my persistence and enthusiasm. I have observed that, as we have come to know each other better through A/R/Tography, it has become easier for me to direct Jake within curriculum time to a task he may be reluctant to do.



Figure 4 “Through his Lens” (2015)

My estranged father was a keen photographer and my childhood was documented through the lens of his camera. There is a tension in my demeanour within the image and I am using a well-rehearsed smile for the camera. The physicality of the paint explores the inner tension within the image. As Jake’s surroundings are devoid of colour, my own surroundings are represented through chaotic brush strokes mirroring the instability of my inner world.

The data suggests that Jake used objects such as his camera, phone and cakes as a way to form social relationships. This corresponds with the research of Eisner (1991) and Wilson (2003), who assert that visual methods can be used to transform experiences into a linguistic counterpart. Jake also appeared to use photographic images to enable him to communicate effectively with members of the A/R/Tography group. This supports the theories of Bourriaud (2002), who suggests that art can be used as a vessel to prompt dialogue and discussion through inter-human negotiation. Vecchi (2010) concurs, going further to connect the process of making to the visual articulation of language. By negotiating social situations through the use of imagery, Jake instigated narrative through both verbal and non-verbal messages; what Miller (2005) refers to as “communication synergy” (p.28). Jake’s engagement with the objects and imagery he created suggests that relational art is occurring through what Bourriaud (2002) defines as, “A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (p.113). Therefore, I would suggest that Jake is engaged in the a/r/tographic practice of making and thinking (Irwin, 2004) and A/R/Tography afforded him the space in which to engage with such practices.

Irwin (2004) and Jeffs and Smith (2005) talk of human beings as sentient creatures who assemble meaning through sensory experience. They argue that learning opportunities should be directed by whatever issues people bring with them; working with these issues is an important part of their work. As I established a relationship with Jake, I became more adept at negotiating this emotional terrain; knowing when to talk but, perhaps more importantly, when to listen (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). Through observing Jake in the A/R/Tography space, I had the opportunity to get to know him as an individual, evidenced by him sharing his musical taste with the group and the sharing of personal information. This compares with the research of Jeffs and Smith (2005)

and hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) who highlight the importance of teachers identifying the needs of their students to share concerns and interests. The research indicates that pedagogical visual culture is occurring defined by Wilson (2003) as “a network of teacher and student interests”.

Jake’s successful integration into the A/R/Tography group is indicative of the creation of a sense of belonging that led to Jake’s individual empowerment (Jeffs & Smith, 2005 and hooks, 2010). This is particularly pertinent, as Jake is termed as having additional social and emotional needs. When Jake became upset and left A/R/Tography, there was no need for me to intervene in my capacity as a teacher. This aligns with the theories of Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) who argues that, when students become active agents in challenging and disrupting societal norms, socio-cultural diversity can be acknowledged and appreciated. This is what appears to have occurred within the space and demonstrated that self-regulation within the group was very much in evidence. Jeffs and Smith (2005) go further to suggest that democracy is a belief that everyone should be treated as autonomous agents, who take part in the governance of their own society, not objects of legislation to be passively ruled over and the incident demonstrated that individuals had agency within the group. Evan assumed the role of peacemaker in order to deal with the situation with Jake; indicating that the space has become a place without an assumed or imposed hierarchy, what Jeffs and Smith (2005) would refer to as a “Culturally Specific” group (p.30). This also links to the notion of social citizenship proposed by Adam and Owens (2016); evidenced by how Evan and Jake work together within the space to resolve the issue.

As the sessions progressed and our relationship strengthened, I observed that Jake began to refer to me with an, “Alright Bennett!”. The fact that he addressed me in this manner both inside and outside of the A/R/Tography group suggests that the language used within the school to create and uphold systems of power had been disrupted (Leslie &

Skipper, 1990). It was apparent I had acquired a nickname, a familiar way of addressing me borne out of the social setting of A/R/Tography (Leslie & Skipper, 1990). The fact that my nickname became “Bennett” is comparable to the assertion of Leslie and Skipper that the type of name used is based on the social situation (p.278). This suggests that the onus for conditions for democratic learning practices to be established cannot be asserted by the facilitator alone. Jake decided on a way to address me that he felt comfortable with and respectfully, I accepted this form of address as evidence of the authentic relationship we had built up. Therefore, boundaries between teacher and student social relations had been disrupted (Uitto, 2012; Bernstein, 1966), something which my research set out to achieve. The above demonstrates that the traditional power relationship between teacher and student was not an issue, as long as I was the person I always have been and did not try to step out of this role; I was being my *authentic self* (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

Jake also used body language as a way of communication, seeking me out, tapping me on the shoulder then moving out of my line of vision as I turned. I would suggest that this is another example of how traditional learning frameworks are challenged and disrupted and how Jake felt comfortable to engage with this level of familiarity. Miller (2005) argues that words have limitations and non-verbal signals are more powerful and genuine. Therefore I would assert that Jake’s use of body language is prompted by the fact I engaged with the A/R/Tography space and A/R/Tographers in a different manner than if I were teaching in the traditional confines of the classroom. Similarities can be found with the theories of hooks (1994), who argues there can be a disparity between the intellectual mind and the body for educators. By engaging within the space as a fellow A/R/Tographer, I formed a symbiotic relationship between body and mind. Therefore by facilitating supportive body language within the A/R/Tography space, it became an open process

where everyone is able to send and process verbal and non-verbal cues accurately (Miller, 2005).

I state earlier that Jake could struggle with curriculum constraints within lessons. Atkinson (2018) refers to this lack of freedom within the curriculum framework as, “pedagogised subjectivities...produced through the power of established practices such as assessment, practice methodologies, examination and inspection” (p.158). The curriculum stands in direct contrast to the democratic learning framework of Room 13 (2012) where student voice is prioritised and the art is student led. Reggio Emilia pedagogy is also against pre-defined curricula and takes a flexible approach to learning. The A/R/Tography group became a critical learning space giving A/R/Tographers freedom of choice that can be lacking within the art and design curriculum framework. By allowing for the “democratization of images” (Wilson, 2003 p.121), boundaries became blurred with less focus on outcomes and more on a/r/tographic practices (Irwin, 2004) which focus on process and narrative. Therefore, enabling for the, “delightful disorder” of student work that cannot and should not be tamed within the confines of the curriculum (Wilson 2003 p.120).

The tension between Jake and the curriculum can be likened to Atkinson’s notion of disobedience (2017). Therefore, the struggle that Jake encountered was in fact a pre-requisite for learning even within the traditional confines of the lesson. I would argue that, by engaging with this disobedient force, Jake fractured the, “parameters of instruction and pedagogic work (Atkinson, 2018 p.147), enabling him to challenge established forms of knowledge. This was in evidence when Jake rejected my offer of playing a game of Exquisite Corpse. My own desire to exert control over the space is demonstrated by a compulsion to engage Jake in a drawing game. This suggests I still subconsciously inhabited the role of keeper of knowledge (Ranciere, 2010b) allowing Jake to voluntarily engage in the learning process (Dewey, 1938). As I

get to know Jake better through A/R/Tography, it became easier to direct him within curriculum time, indicating the establishment of a positive relationship. Jeffs and Smith (2005) and hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) highlight the importance of students believing in the authenticity of the educator. Therefore the A/R/Tography space enabled me to respond to and meet the needs of each individuals practice (Atkinson, 2018 p.203). My authentic voice was heard within the space, enabling me to transcend traditional boundaries and work alongside Jake.

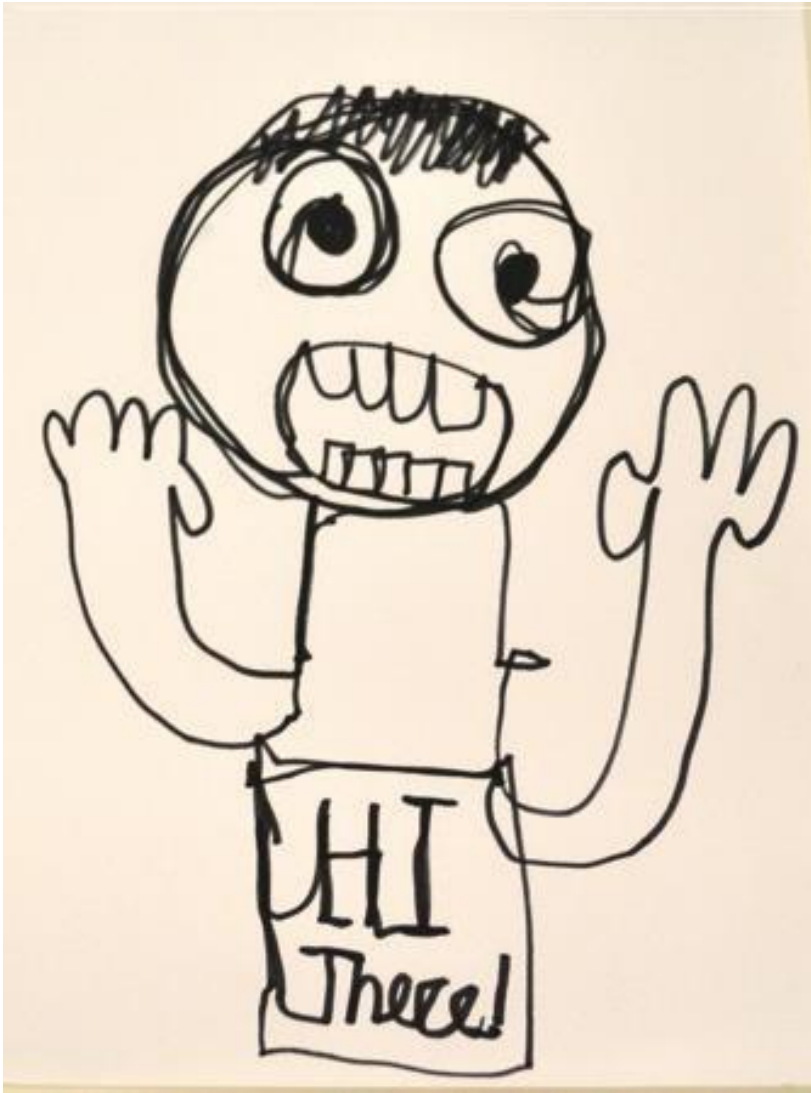


Figure 5 "My Alter-Ego - Colin" (2018)

This is Mikey's first drawing of Colin that he created and shared within the A/R/Tography Space. Mikey drew the character within minutes, pinning the artwork onto the wall for all to see, evidently proud of his work. The boldness and enthusiasm contained within the image is contagious. When I look into the face of Colin I am reminded of his creators cheery disposition and love of performance.

Mikey

Mikey has a cheery disposition and seems younger than his fourteen years. A natural performer, he has tremendous enthusiasm for art and loves to draw and create. When he was younger, Mikey used to design pillowcases at home with his grandmother, who ignited his passion for art. Mikey attends A/R/Tography as he enjoys being creative and socialising. He tells me that he draws a lot in school and at home, usually when he is bored. "I have really enjoyed A/R/Tography because of the group they are just like funny and really confident they are people like me."

Mikey demands attention constantly, either asking for my help making his cardboard creations, or seeking approval of the drawings and work that he has created. He works fast and is always thinking about what to do next. *When observing Mikey work, his approach to creating reminds me of when I used to observe my youngest son at play within a nursery setting. How he used to move from craft table to craft table to engage with materials.* Mikey's thought and making processes appear to be quick and impulsive. As Mikey engages with materials he talks to me about what he is making and the rationale behind the work. I have nicknamed him *Speedy Gonzales* with reference to the animated Warner Brothers character, portrayed as the, "The Fastest Mouse in all Mexico." *I have found Mikey to be very demanding of my time within G.C.S.E Art lessons, which can cause me frustration when teaching a large class.* His demands for my attention are a lot more manageable and rewarding outside of the pressures of the curriculum.

During one, particular session, Mikey produces a sketchbook full of drawings. "This is Colin my alter-ego" he announces. Mikey tells me that Colin is an anarchistic figure who can be seen swearing and making hand gestures on each page of the sketchbook. "Is it okay he swears

Miss?” Mikey is not sure whether Colin’s hand gestures are palatable for the school environment. Colin wears t-shirts with slogans such as, “I Don’t Care” crudely emblazoned onto them. This is a character invented to be the antithesis of his creator.

Mikey tells me that Colin was inspired by You Tube videos named *The Odd 1s Out*. Mikey is also a big fan of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* a series of books on the life of an American boy who struggles to fit into Middle School. Mikey’s step mum is Head of Maths at the school and I know that his stepbrother and stepsister are both academically gifted. Mikey attends additional support outside of normal curriculum time to help with his literacy and numeracy and, through my experience of teaching him G.C.S.E art and design; I know that he is a student who struggles within the confines of the curriculum. Through observing Mikey within a classroom setting I know him as a very polite student. *I contemplate whether the character of Colin has been developed as a way of visually articulating his inner feelings.* There is a lot of Mikey’s fun, outgoing personality within Colin. His wicked sense of humour is evident in his character and the cartoons he creates through his art. Somehow, Mikey’s quick and spontaneous way of working suits this quirky character and Colin’s rebellious nature fits the continuous line drawings that his creator has chosen with which to represent him.

“Miss can I make a Colin?” A felt monster on display has caught Mikey’s eye and he is anxious to see his creation in three-dimensional form. I help him choose the colour scheme for his creation (grey felt with lime green thread) and carefully show him how to create a template for his design out of paper. Mikey is not dexterous with the scissors and has to be shown how to pin paper to the fabric. After seeing him struggle, I volunteer my help and begin to carefully cut the shapes out of the felt. As I cut, Mikey asks how long it will take to make Colin and how he can’t wait to see the final result. He tells me that he is no good at sewing and that his grandma spends time with him making art and showing him

how to sew. *This shared story prompts me to recall my own happy memories making art at my grandparents' house.* I mention to him how I struggled with learning how to knit in school, as I was the only lefthanded student in the class and I could not master the process; no matter how much the teacher demonstrated. Mikey interjects, telling me that he is also left-handed. I continue telling him of my frustration and how, when I was upset, I had mentioned to my grandmother my inability to master knitting, she had taken the time to painstakingly learn how to knit with her non-dominant hand in order to teach me. Mikey nods and smiles and tells me that “grandma’s are like that.”

A/R/Tography is drawing to a close and I am busy cleaning up materials. *I am feeling slightly irritated by the mess left behind and distracted by the noise.* Mikey is asking for help unpicking stitching, which has gone awry. Preoccupied and without thinking I say, “Can’t you ask your mum to help you with that at home?” *I immediately realise my mistake and regret my choice of words.* Mikey has previously told me that his mum died when he was six and I saw him visibly flinch when I refer to his step mum as mum. “She is not my mum.” His tone is polite and measured, but I can see from his demeanour that my words have hurt him. I apologise immediately and in an effort to make amends for my careless slip of words. I talk to him about how my children’s dad died when they were young and through witnessing their experiences of death I can understand how difficult it must be for him. Mikey shifts from foot to foot listening but not making eye contact. He hesitates for a moment then says, “I feel bad for them because I know what they are going through.” I begin to unpick the stitching with Mikey standing beside me, observing. *Somehow the process of rhythmically sewing eases the difficulty of the subject of our conversation.* I tell him I know he understands and not many young people do. I mention my own mum had died and said how I miss her. I talk about the jewellery box my brother gave to me at Christmas, which still contains a trace of her perfume, her smell. Mikey tells me that he has a similar item, which

reminds him of his mum. We continue to sew together for a while longer in companionable silence, the making punctuated by occasional comments on the work in hand.



Figure 6 “Looking back 1974 - Present” (2015)

Through digital manipulation I am able to revisit my mother and grandmother at the beginning of my own life. I intentionally obscure my adult self within the image becoming the faded trace of a memory existing only in the here and now.

When watching Mikey create, I recalled memories of my youngest son playing at nursery. This indicates how I, as an educator, brought my lived experiences and system of cultural beliefs into both the space and my interactions with the A/R/Tographers. Comparisons can be drawn here with Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1984; 1990; 1993; 2010). When I observed Mikey within the space, I related the occurring phenomena to the structural code of my lived experiences. This reciprocal relationship is evidenced through sharing memories and stories of our grandmothers. This aligns with the dispositions formulated in childhood to use our lived experiences as a point of reference (Bourdieu, 1993). Both Mikey and I brought our own system of cultural beliefs, our own habitus into the situation. Therefore, when Mikey and I worked alongside each other within the space, I used my individual history and life experience to help make sense of, "...ordinary sense experience" (Bourdieu 1984 p.22). My habitus is being re-shaped by the on-going experiences occurring within the field (Bourdieu, 1990c). I therefore enacted my own structural code of lived experience within the space and Mikey reciprocated by enacting out his own structural code of lived experience.

The fact that I chose to reveal a personal narrative to Mikey is indicative that I elected to theoretically move to a space beyond the classroom to a place of sharing knowledge (hooks, 2003). Therefore, I chose to make my personal life visible (Uitto, 2012). By telling the story of my grandmother, I used my personal identity as a common entry point (hooks, 2010 p.18). The importance of sharing stories and finding common entry points is evidenced when Mikey and I found out that we were both left-handed (hooks, 2010). I would assert that I chose to disengage with my traditional teacher identity, allowing myself to be more critical of my own pedagogy (hooks, 1994). This deliberate act enhanced the learning experience, as I was able to foster a reciprocal learning space which provided a commonality through personal narrative. hooks (1994) identifies this as telling stories to provide

common entry points to illustrate a critical point; the point in this particular case being that I too struggled with a practical task in school and received help, presenting myself as authentic to Mikey (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). I am therefore employing conscious teaching methods within my pedagogy (hooks, 2003).

Within the A/R/Tography space I was able to accommodate the needs of Mikey. The curriculum framework did not afford me the time to do this, as when I inhabited the role of educator, I imposed my own agenda onto the class and did not always deal with individual concerns. The A/R/Tography space allowed me to work in the role of facilitator; adapting to Mikey's individual needs, demonstrating teaching with love defined by hooks (2003) as showing, "...Care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust" (p.131). This is demonstrated in particular by the incident where I absentmindedly referred to Mikey's stepmother as his mother. I would assert that, to employ such pedagogic methods is entirely appropriate in this particular instance and I employed my professional expertise of knowing when to talk and when to listen (hooks 1994; 2003; 2010). In my role as facilitator and adult in the room, it was up to me to establish boundaries using my professional judgment to direct and steer conversations (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). I chose to disclose personal information about my own experiences of bereavement to empathise and create a personal connection with Mikey, therefore I used my own habitus (Bourdieu 2010) as a point of reference. This is indicative of me using my own cultural lived experiences as a sociological gaze with which to understand how Mikey is reacting and the impact of my actions (Grenfell, 2003).

In my experience, this emotional connection with students does not occur within my day-to-day teaching and, as highlighted by hooks (2003), Uitto (2012) and Van Manen & Li (2002) I used my experiences and intuition to negotiate the problematic nature of personal relationships within a teaching environment. Through revealing my

personal stories and identity, Mikey felt able to explore issues concerning him, as an individual. It was only through disengaging with the traditional identity of teacher and inhabiting the more democratic role of art facilitator, that this neglected area of my own pedagogy was revealed. This corresponds with the theories of Eisner (1991) and his argument that teaching can become an insular process. By listening and engaging in dialogue with Mikey, we connected through speaking about our mothers whilst working alongside each other. Therefore forming a “co-operative of learning” (hooks, 2010 p.22). Miller (2005) goes further to assert, “Good teachers are also good listeners – listening not only to the words being spoken but also to the silent messages that their students send” (p.30). The use of the nickname *Speedy Gonzales* was a term of endearment I used to address Mikey, borne out of the social setting. Through working alongside Mikey and observing how quick and impulsive his artistic process are, I constructed a nickname through, “...social negotiation” (Leslie & Skipper 1990, p.279). This supports the theories of Leslie and Skipper (1990) regarding the importance of how nicknames are acquired through social process. To those outside of the context of the A/R/Tography group, the nickname was meaningless. I also employed the use of vernacular language (hooks, 2003) that was familiar to Mikey.

Whilst Mikey is engaged in creative practices within the A/R/Tography space, he talked to me about what he was making and the rationale behind his work. This corresponds with the theories of Bourriaud (2002) who suggests that a successful piece of art will open dialogue and discussion in the form of inter-human negotiation (p.41). Parallels can be drawn with the a/r/tographic concept of, “theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/ research, teaching/learning, and art/making” (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p. 28). Mikey talked to me about the art that he was making and in turn, he learned through the process of making. This is indicative of a/r/tographic practice occurring through the integration of, “...knowing, doing and making” (Irwin, 2004 p.29). Wilson (2003)

identifies the importance of narratives and the right to narrate within making spaces. The way in which Mikey engaged with materials highlights how we create meaning through sensory interaction with the world around us (Eisner, 1991). Through experimenting with creating, I would argue that Mikey engaged with some basic level of play (Eisner, 1991). Bourriaud (2002) concurs, likening artistic activity to a game whose functions, forms and patterns evolve in accordance with the social context (p.11).

Within the A/R/Tography space, Mikey introduced me to his cartoon character Colin. The inspiration for Colin was derived from the main characters in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *The Odd Is Out*, which are very much designed to be anti-heroes; outsiders who struggle with the adversity of day-to-day life but who always find a way to succeed. Parallels can be found here with Mikey's creation of the anarchistic Colin. Testing traditional boundaries to ascertain whether the character was allowed to swear is indicative of the lack of freedom within the curriculum framework similar to Atkinson's theory of Disobedience (2017). By engaging in the disobedient act of creating a character who swears, Mikey is retaliating against his lack of freedom within curriculum time, creating what Bourriaud (2002) refers to as a disruption, which can, "...record tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life" (p.17). Mikey deferred to me as the adult in the room to seek reassurance and permission for what he perceived to be risky art; something he could not explore within the confines of the curriculum. The A/R/Tography space allowed his concealed and self-generated art to become visible to both myself and other members of the group (Wilson 2003). In the case of Mikey, Colin revealed the antithesis of his own persona; arguably a visual representation of Atkinson's theory of disobedience. Therefore the creation of Colin enabled Mikey's self-initiated art to become a vehicle for dialogue, visual articulation and self-expression (Vecchi, 2010).



Figure 7 “Northern Soul Keep The Faith” (2017)

When I first met Alice her grandfather had just died. She spoke a lot about him within A/R/Tography and her bereavement, was handled with care and compassion by her fellow A/R/Tographers. Alice’s candid disclosure of her grief prompted the A/R/Tographers to share their own stories of loss. Alice’s Grandfather was a huge fan of Northern Soul and this piece of art was made in his memory, representing a bold statement in the face of challenging times.

Alice

Through my observations Alice is a quiet and shy girl. She likes coming to A/R/Tography because she doesn't feel judged by her peers. Alice lost her grandad recently and the group gives her a space to share her feelings and make art to remember him. Alice has a passion for dance and I have observed that A/R/Tography has provided a space to show off her dancing skills within the group. Alice has told me that her grandad used to pay for her dance classes and she has carried on to, "make him proud." Alice loves to paint and create within the group. I am surprised that she had not chosen Art and Design as one of her subject options at G.C.S.E. When I ask about this she tells me it was because she felt under pressure to make, "good stuff." Through observing Alice, I see that she is very self-motivated and works well off her own initiative. I have observed that Alice blushes easily when talking to other members of the group and mentions to me during A/R/Tography that she can be quite self-conscious and sometimes she feels under pressure to act or behave in a certain way.

Although I teach Alice photography at G.C.S.E, prior to A/R/Tography I did not really know her as an individual. She is situated within a large class where there are a number of challenging students. *My impression of Alice is that she has always been a good student who tries hard and does not particularly stand out within the classroom environment.* Within the first couple of sessions, Alice tells me that her granddad has died and she wants to make art to remember him by. He loved Northern Soul and encouraged her love of dancing. I suggest that she bring in items that remind her of him so we could work together to create something special. As Alice talks to me about her grandfather I recall and convey my own experiences of bereavement prompting us to share stories about relatives who are no longer with us; how it is good to look back at images and recall happy memories.

One particular session, other members of the group are present when Alice speaks about the loss of her granddad. As she relays her story to the group Alice comments, "I never thought that I would be talking about my granddad and Northern Soul in school. I have never spoken about this before." Everyone has been listening sympathetically whilst making. Lenny gives Alice a hug telling her his hamster had died recently and Tim gets out his phone to show everyone pictures of his dog, Boris, who has died. Jake begins to speak about hauntings and how he, "reckons he is a bit psychic." *I am struck by the way in which every member has given each other the space to speak and to be listened to without fear of judgment.* In my experience such meaningful conversations would not usually occur within the confines of a lesson and there is a feeling of openness and community within the group. As the A/R/Tography sessions progress I observe that Alice is becoming more confident within the space and is happy to perform dance moves in front of myself and the rest of the group. *I reflect on how she appears to be free of inhibitions and comfortable with her peers.*

On another occasion, Alice brings in some photographs of her dressed up in various dance costumes to A/R/Tography. Alice tells me how proud her granddad was of her dancing achievements and how she liked to make him proud. After some discussion, Alice decides to photocopy the original images in order to create a piece of artwork. As we stand by the photocopier Alice starts to talk to me about her family. Flicking through the images she shows me pictures of her mum and dad, "when they were together." Alice volunteers, "Mum had me when she was very young – sixteen I think. She is only thirty one now and sometimes she feels like my sister." Alice tells me that she does not see her dad any more but does not elaborate. Once the images are copied Alice carefully arranges them over a table. I observe as she begins to move them around mentally curating where each particular image fits within her visual pathway.

After some time has passed Alice gathers the images and bundles them into her bag. She tells me that she had decided to make a tribute to her granddad by painting a canvass commemorating his love of Northern Soul music. Alice begins the artwork with fervour and enthusiasm. I suggest creating a stencil for the symbol and wording for the artwork which can then be masked off and spray painted. After demonstrating to Alice how to create the same, I observe how she carefully creates a stencil for her chosen words. I observe that Alice is very methodical in her approach to her work. Alice does not require nor ask for my assistance in creating the art and she has a very strong idea of what the piece will look like. *I feel that I am there in my capacity as a listener, a companion to hear the stories that arise through the process of making as Alice goes about her work.*

When Alice finishes her art tribute to her granddad she is eager to create more work. Together we look through photographs of her family and come up with the idea of making a sculpture of a family tree to suggest ties. We speak about how she can dip found branches in paint then laminate and tie images of her family onto each branch. Alice is initially very excited about the idea and begins the new project with enthusiasm. However, her attendance begins to waiver until the point that I only see her in class time. I am reluctant to approach her during lessons, as I do not wish her to feel under pressure from me to attend A/R/Tography. *Intuitively, I feel Alice will approach me when she feels ready.* Alice does seek me out during a lunch break and confides in me that her little brother is poorly and no one knew what was wrong. Alice had been visiting her brother in hospital after school and is also helping with her two younger siblings in the family. Concerned for her, I tell her to concentrate on her family and that the group will always be there for her when her brother is well again and things had settled down at home.

Alice returns to the group about a month later armed with scanned copies of her families' handprints. By the size of them I can tell they

belong to younger children and she tells me that some are hers but also her siblings. “Are these the handprints of your little brother?” I inquire flicking through the images, Alice nods and smiles telling me he is now back home and she is going to create a piece of art work to represent her family using the hands. *I smile too, glad to see Alice back at A/R/Tography and relieved that her young brother has recovered.* Over the course of the following sessions Alice’s attendance is sporadic. However, when she is within the A/R/Tography space, working on her art, I observe the familiar way she creates, moving the photocopied images around until satisfied and carefully choosing colours to match each set and size of handprints.



Figure 8 "Nanna, Gamp and Mum" (2014)

This photographic emulsion print depicts loved ones who are no longer with me. Paint has been layered on top of the image acting as a visual metaphor for the fading of memories and the passing of time.

Alice told me that she did not take Art and Design at G.C.S.E because she felt under pressure to make “good stuff”. This is suggestive of the current political climate where neoliberal economics have resulted in education being viewed as competitive (Adams, 2018; Adams & Owens, 2016, hooks 1994; 2003). This perceived pressure implies that Alice felt obliged to make quality outcome based work arguably reducing my art teaching into the transmission of knowledge (Ranciere, 1991). Therefore acting as an inhibitor to a subject, which lends itself so readily to the principles of freedom and creativity. Conversely the pressure Alice felt to make, “good stuff” could be indicative of formulations of habitus in childhood, which acted as sociological constraints (Bourdieu, 2010). This in turn is linked to expectations conditioned in childhood acting as a form of social structure (Bourdieu, 2000a). Therefore, Alice may have thought that she is unable to make “good stuff” as her habitus is acting as an inhibitor limiting her progress (Bourdieu, 2010).

Through observing Alice’s non-verbal communication, I observed that Alice blushed easily which I interpreted as an underlying lack of confidence in her own abilities. This aligns with the theories of Miller (2005) who asserts that it is imperative that teachers are able to read such signals in order to reciprocate positively rather than negative signals that may impede on effective communication. Adams and Owens (2016) perceive this loss of confidence in ability as a, “...culturally dominant trend in the UK” (P.74) and urge educators to find ways in which to work around this issue. In the case of Alice the dialogue arising out of her recent bereavement and family issues acted as prompts for the creation of art. This is indicative of a pedagogical visual culture site constructed by children. Wilson (2003) argues that, “...non-obligatory artworks of visual culture are almost always directed toward the production of narratives” (p.118). In the case of Alice the narratives which occurred were centred round her family. hooks, (1994; 2003; 2010) and Jeffs and Smith (2005) discuss how informal learning spaces can provide an opportunity for dialogue to arise in contrast to

the adversarial culture bred within the classroom and this is what occurred within the A/R/Tography space.

The art Alice created within the A/R/Tography space is similar to the theories of Bourriaud (2002) who suggests that a successful piece of art will open dialogue and discussion in the form of inter-human negotiation (p.41). Similarities can be drawn with the a/r/tographic concept of, "theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/research, teaching/learning, and art/making" (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p.28). The theme of sharing stories provided a common entry point within the A/R/Tography space and this is in evidence when Alice talked about her late grandfather and her relationship with her mother and father (hooks, 2010). This establishes that by allowing a space for freedom Alice was willing to exchange in dialogue with the group and me as the facilitator. Wilson (2003) refers to this as an, "inter-textual dialogue" between student and teacher (p.11). Alice discerns, "I never thought I would be talking about my granddad and Northern Soul in school. I have never spoken about this before." The inter-textual dialogue in this particular instance was created surrounding loss and bereavement. In my reflections I observed the sense of mutual respect and community within the group in response to Alice's narrative on the loss of her granddad. Through my observations the space had been transformed into a self-governing democratic learning space. This is comparable to the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005) who list the qualities which are important to freedom and democracy, as happiness, concern, trust, respect, appreciation, affection and hope. The A/R/Tographers displayed a responsibility towards each other's wellbeing, demonstrated through the care and concern in Lenny's hug and the shared stories of similar experiences by Tim and Jake. This demonstrates a kind of social citizenship as proposed by Adam and Owens (2016) when creativity and democracy align (p.20).

I observed that over time Alice became more confident within A/R/Tography. This empowerment is evidenced when she danced freely

within the space without embarrassment or inhibition. Likewise, Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) argues that when students become active agents in challenging and disrupting societal norms socio-cultural diversity can be acknowledged and appreciated. Alice was in a mutually supportive environment where she felt able to reveal her dancer identity. The A/R/Tography space was created by a “Culturally Specific” group (Jeffs & Smith 2005) in which

A/R/Tographers chose to work alongside each other, talk and listen (p.30). Similarities can be found with the definition of a/r/tography occurring in the liminal in-between (Bickell, 2006). The in-between in this instance is the space between the school and the A/R/Tography space. This corresponds with the theories of hooks (2003) and the concept of a learning community situated in an environment where difference and intimacy form a symbiotic relationship. The informal making spaces could act as enablers against the curriculum and allow risks to be taken socially. Miller (2005) concurs arguing that a supportive learning environment necessitates not sending messages of rejection through the use of personal space. It is important that it is an open process where students and teachers are able to send and process both verbal and non-verbal cues accurately.

Alice was self-directed when creating art and I was very much present as both facilitator and listener and she did not require or want any artistic direction. Jeffs and Smith (2005) and hooks (2005) discuss the importance of the educator repressing the impulse to be the provider and to actively listen to students and this was something that I employed in my engagement with Alice. There was a strong relationship between the creation of the artwork and the social context of Alice and her relationship with her family. This corresponds with the theories of Bourdieu (1993) who proposes that social dispositions are acquired in the formative years of an individual's upbringing and are very much linked to social experiences formulated in childhood. Formative

experience and habitus are therefore continually shaped by on-going contexts, in this case Alice's relationship with her family.

The artwork produced by Alice acted as a vehicle for prompting dialogue from both Alice and her fellow A/R/Tographers. There is evidence that relational art was created, defined by Bourriaud (2002) as, "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (p.113). There was also the added element of Alice handling images to mentally curate where each piece fitted. Therefore, when Alice engaged with materials the experience came to have a "feelingful quality" (Eisner, 1991 p.87). By exploring her relationship with her family through the process of making, Alice employed a/r/tographic practices as a form of knowing that "...integrates knowing, doing and making" (Irwin, 2004 p.29). The exploration of the relationship between art practice and one's being in the world is also investigated in the theories of Wilson (2003) and Adams and Owens (2016).

I expressed concern when Alice stopped attending A/R/Tography. This concern was borne out of the fact that through sharing stories with Alice I was aware that there were issues within her family life. Uitto (2012) warns of the paradox of being personally present in relationships with students but not too personal and as the facilitator of A/R/Tography, I identified the need to negotiate the field of learning and employed a conscious teaching methodology as proposed by hooks (2003). This corresponds with the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005) who highlight the need for educators to learn how to negotiate narratives, "...when to be quiet and when to talk" (p.38). Alice chose to disclose personal information to me disrupting the traditional student teacher boundary serving to democratise our relationship (hooks, 2010). Bourdieu's concept of habitus is pertinent to my response to Alice's family life. The fact that within my own upbringing there were problematic issues with

my father demonstrates the acquisition of dispositions in my formative years (Bourdieu, 1994). Therefore, I interpreted the narratives shared by Alice through my own structural code of lived experiences. I endeavoured to use my habitus as a sociological gaze in which to interpret the reasons why Alice may be thinking and acting the way she did within the space (Grenfell, 2003).



Figure 9 “Keiko and Lenny” (2018)

This image was taken at the second A/R/Tography session when Lenny introduced the group to Keiko. Lenny is heavily involved in the Furry Community, a form of fandom where members dress up as anthropomorphic characters with human characteristics. Lenny had created the textile costume at home with her mum over a period of months and bought the costume in at the beginning of the school day. Once within the A/R/Tography space, Lenny chose to transform into Keiko to interact with his fellow A/R/Tographers.

Lenny

Through observations I have noted that Lenny is a loud and gregarious member of A/R/Tography who has customised the standard school uniform by donning Dr Marten boots and adding purple flecks to his short hair. Lenny is perhaps the most prolific member of the A/R/Tography group and is frequently drawing and creating characters. “I draw all the time and wanted to meet like-minded people and have the freedom to do what I wanted. In school there are groups like the populars and the clowns, well I am always known as the artist.” During the course of the research project Lenny has begun to identify as a male within the confines of the A/R/Tography group. Lenny has requested that within the text of the research project that he is referred to as male.

Lenny is a whirlwind of energy and ideas and always has numerous art projects on the go. Although there are no leaders within the group, Lenny is definitely a driving force and if he has an idea for a piece of art he will recruit other members of the group to help realise his intentions collaboratively. As Lenny becomes more familiar and confident within the space, he begins to share his eclectic musical tastes and YouTube skits for everyone to see on the television. Observing Lenny I note that he can have difficulty focussing and moves from one idea to the other quickly. By his own admission, Lenny does not always complete what he starts. He is a natural performer and is heavily involved in the furry community. The furry community is a form of fandom in which members dress up as anthropomorphic animals with human characteristics (whatisfurry.org, 2017). His furry identity is a character called Keiko.

“My work has strong links to digital websites and I have loads of fellow furry friends online. We meet through our characters and their personalities. If their personalities fit, we connect and begin to create

stories around them. I developed the character of Keiko and he is the main character. He has evolved and I have created other characters with different personalities. By visually drawing characters I am venting through art. The group gives me the chance to showcase my work and my characters. For me it all starts with colours and different emotions. I then start to develop a character and a narrative about the character. I like the fact that when I perform as Keiko no one can know how you feel on the inside because you have got a mask on. If I bumped into someone and blushed it would not matter because no one could see me. When I am Keiko my performing and dancing is much stronger.”

Throughout his time within the group I have seen a transformation in Lenny. He has had his hair cut short and has begun to wear gender neutral uniform. His mother is British and father Turkish. Lenny has spoken to me about the problematic relationship with his dad. His mum and dad are no longer together, his dad lives in Turkey and Lenny does not see him very often. When he does he is very dominant telling him how he should be behaving as a girl and what he should be wearing. Lenny mentions his favourite phrase is, “... A daughter of mine should....” When Lenny visits him he does not feel like his time is his own. If Lenny is engrossed in drawing and his father says it’s time to stop and do something else, he is expected to do it instantly. Lenny tells me, “...I find this really difficult to do because I have got all my things around me and I am in my zone. He likes to control my time.” Lenny has told me that he finds it hard to be accepted by his father for who he is.



Figure 10 Digital Furrie Characters (2018)

Lenny drew the above characters on his i-pad during an A/R/Tography session.. Lenny applied his self-taught skills of digital sketching to create the characters. “By visually drawing characters I am venting through art. The group gives me the chance to showcase my work and my characters. For me it all starts with colours and different emotions.”

Lenny has brought his iPad to A/R/Tography to digitally draw his characters. I glimpse over his shoulder and see a character I have not been introduced to before. He is not a furry – more a Japanese manga type character with hair covering one eye. Around the digital sketch are annotations about his character traits. This is something I have noticed that Lenny does a lot with each of his characters. The phrase, “He is gay” catches my eye but before I can look further he quickly uses his finger to flick the digital image onto the next. I tell him the character looks interesting and decide to walk away, mindful that this was a piece of art that Lenny did not want to share with me. The session continues and I have moved to work with another member of the group. Lenny walks up to me, hands me his phone and tells me to look at the text. The text reads, “...All my friends are cool about this. From now on could you please call me Ashley.” *I smile and nod, feeling privileged that he has been able to share something important to him with me.* It occurs to me that I see Lenny in both A/R/Tography and within curriculum time and wonder whether he wants me to address him as Ashley in both settings. When I question him about this Lenny hesitates for a moment before saying it was up to me. *I sense that Lenny is reluctant to place boundaries on when I address him as Ashley but is also unsure how this would work outside of the confines of the A/R/Tography space.* I make a mental note to choose not to address him as either Lenny or Ashley within curriculum time.

Through previous conversations with Lenny, he has told me that the characters that he creates represent different elements of his personality. Each character has a backstory. One particular character is “Antidote”. We sit together flicking through his sketchbook and Lenny shows me Antidote. “Antidote was created to help with anxiety. Antidote follows people around who are feeling anxious; like a shadow. Although he may seem scary he is actually there to help.” Lenny tells me that he got the idea for the character after suffering with nightmares

when he was younger. “There were shadows in the room that used to make me scared. I think I suffered from sleep paralysis so I couldn’t move. I created Antidote out of the shadows to help me.”



Figure 11 "The Hoover Monster" (2014)

As a young girl I used to suffer from vivid nightmares and this illustration is based on such a dream. I would hear the roar of the vacuum cleaner coming from an upstairs bedroom and as I climbed the stairs to investigate I was confronted with a giant monster vacuum with giant teeth and menacing eyes.

When I first met Lenny he told me that he came to A/R/Tography to, “...meet like-minded people and have the freedom to do what I wanted.” This supports the theories of Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) who argues that art education can become a site for social reconstruction. For Lenny these “like-minded people” were the other self-selecting A/R/Tographers as well as himself. All A/R/Tographers had voluntarily chosen to be part of the research project, choosing to inhabit the A/R/Tography space, which had become a, “culturally specific” group in which to work alongside each other (Jeffs & Smith, 2005 p.30). Through my observations, Lenny could be subversive in nature and freedom of choice was very important to him. Atkinson (2017, p.157) argues that art is a disobedient force and Lenny used this disobedience in terms of the way he expressed identity through his choice of clothing and the self-generated art he brought to A/R/Tography. During a conversation with Lenny he disclosed that he found it hard to be accepted by his father for who he was. This is indicative of formulations of *habitus* in childhood, which have acted as a sociological constraint on Lenny (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu proposes that these dispositions are acquired in the formative years of an individual’s upbringing and are very much linked to social experiences formulated in childhood. Therefore, individuals bring their own system of cultural beliefs, their own *habitus*, with them to various social situations. I would argue that through engaging in disobedient art practices and harnessing its, “forcework” (Atkinson, 2018, p.158), Lenny chose to use his understanding of his *habitus* as a, “new gaze” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) to explore issues of identity (Grenfell, 2003).

The self-generated art of Lenny had a very strong online presence and is indicative of the A/R/Tography space becoming a pedagogical visual culture site constructed by children and youth created in response to the post-modern rise of digital culture (Wilson, 2003). Lenny created a space for himself within the group where he felt able to explore, “disobedient pedagogies” and new possibilities for practice and

understanding. This aligns with the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) who claim that the field of contemporary art can open up space of social engagement and diversity, "...in part as a manifestation of social media and globalisation" (p.12). There was a strong presence of narratives (Wilson, 2003 p.118). In the case of Lenny the narratives that occurred centred round issues of identity.

The art Lenny created within the A/R/Tography space corresponds with the theories of relational art. Relational art is defined by Bourriaud (2002) as, "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (p.113). Lenny used the A/R/Tography space to generate art as Keiko and interhuman negotiation occurred as Lenny introduced and performed as Keiko within the A/R/Tography space. A parallel can be drawn with the a/r/tographic concept of "theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/research, teaching/learning, and art/making" (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p.28). I observed that Lenny was a driving force within the A/R/Tography group and noted how he recruited other members to help realise his intentions through the process of collaboration. The blurring of the distinction between individual and collaborative art can be likened to the Room 13 (2012) model of learning. This is also indicative of the theories of Dash (2006a) who proposes that people, "shut out of mainstream cultural institutions" (p.34) use creative collaboration as a form of expression to assert their own subjectivity. The A/R/Tography space existed separately from the curriculum therefore the distinction between collaborative and individual production was not problematic as there was no assessment criteria involved (Adams, 2010).

As the sessions progressed I observed how Lenny grew in confidence through the way he negotiated the A/R/Tography space which enabled him to represent the life that he led. This is similar to the theories of

Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) who argues that when students become active agents in challenging and disrupting societal norms, socio-cultural diversity can be acknowledged and appreciated. Lenny was in a supportive environment where he felt able to reveal not only his Keiko identity but also his chosen identity to the group. This aligns with the definition of a/r/tography occurring in the liminal inbetween (Bickel, 2006). The in-between in this instance was the space between the school and the A/R/Tography space. hooks (2003) talks about the concept of a learning community situated in an environment where difference and intimacy form a symbiotic relationship. Such informal spaces could act as enablers against the curriculum and allow risks to be taken socially which is what occurred within the A/R/Tography space.

Lenny introduced me to Keiko his furry identity in the second A/R/Tography session and told me that his work had, "...strong links to digital websites...I have loads of fellow furry friends online." Lenny explored his identity through the creation and dissemination of both digital and physical drawings within the A/R/Tography space. This would suggest that Lenny used art to decode values and concepts associated with his identity (Eisner, 1991 and Wilson, 2002). Lenny also began to wear gender-neutral uniform and asked me to call him Ashley. There appeared to be a hybrid mix of gender and cultural identity being explored by Lenny within the space corresponding with the theories of Dash, (2006) who calls for pedagogues to recognise the existence of diasporic influences. Arguably the diasporic influences related not only to the mixed heritage culture in which Lenny was borne into but the socio-diverse online culture of the furry community. This supports the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) who argue that contemporary art has opened up spaces of social engagement characterised by diversity, "...in part as a manifestation of social media and globalisation" (p.12).

Dash's theories are particularly pertinent to Lenny's mixed race heritage and problematic relationship with his father. Dash (2007) argues that the prevailing cultural perception within the Nation is "white British" (p.346). Lenny is half Turkish and his need to create characters may be indicative of him safely exploring his cultural identity. Dash argues that a curriculum that excludes the achievements of ethnic groups can lead to learners lacking in self-esteem and undermined self-confidence. This is evidenced when Lenny tells me that if he is dancing within the character of Keiko, accidentally bumped into someone and blushed, it would not matter as no one could see him. Dash (2006a) argues that diasporic people have the propensity to use their bodies as, "...a key medium of creative and political expression" (p.27) through which to articulate their presence. This would suggest that Lenny asserted his presence and identity through dancing. Dash (2010) calls for pedagogues to identify the diasporic influences of the multicultural society in which we live to help reveal to students their place within society, eradicating what he refers to as "amorphous referents" (p.123). The A/R/Tography space allowed Lenny the freedom to explore his identity and his place within society. Difference within the space was celebrated and Lenny was able to explore and assert his identity through the creation of Keiko.

The A/R/Tography space allowed the concealed, self-generated art of Lenny to become visible to both myself and other members of the group. This demonstrated that Lenny needed a space to make art independent of the curriculum. Wilson (2003) suggests, "...these nonobligatory artworks of visual culture are almost always directed toward the production of narratives" (p.118). This is revealed through Lenny's creation of characters that enabled him to explore identity as with Keiko and his manga characters, and also characters which allowed him to cope with his anxieties and fears such as Antidote. The characters not only assisted Lenny with internal dialogue, but were revealed to others through their social context which is indicative of relational art, creating

discussion and dialogue within the group (Bourriaud, 2002). Therefore the art created by Lenny became a vehicle for dialogue and the visual articulation of self-expression (Vecchi, 2010). Using art as a vehicle within the confines of the A/R/Tography space, Lenny expressed the wish I refer to him as, “Ashley.” Tellingly he stated, “...all my friends are cool about this.” This would suggest that the traditional boundaries between teacher and student were disrupted and that Lenny no longer viewed me as his teacher but something else. The democratic learning framework created by A/R/Tography was built on humanistic values (Dash, 2005; hooks, 2003; Jeffs & Smith, 2005) and the qualities of this nurturing environment became part of my pedagogy. I built up a relationship of trust with Lenny and he believed in my authenticity as an educator (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). The space also facilitated me actively listening to Lenny and helping him find his voice. hooks (2010) argues that it is the role of the educator to, “...actively empower the individual, but also become actively engaged so the teacher is no longer the leader” (p.22). The A/R/Tography space enabled me to respond to and meet the needs of each individuals practice (Atkinson, 2018 p.203). Therefore my authentic voice was heard within the space and enabled me to transgress traditional boundaries.

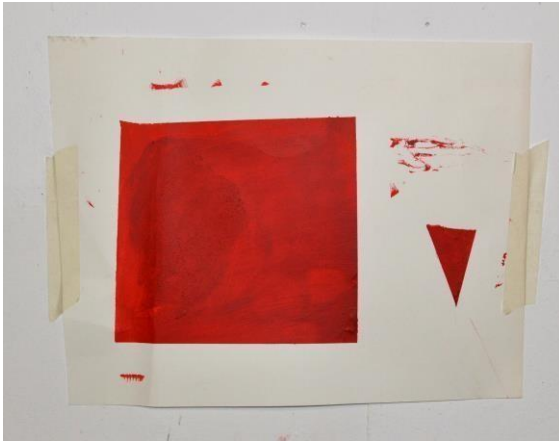


Figure 12 Large Red Square, Small Red Triangle (2017)

This is a collaborative piece of art by Tim and Evan created with masking tape and acrylic paints left out on the table. Tim and Evan are using a technique I demonstrated within the A/R/Tography space. Their work is very spontaneous and process based .

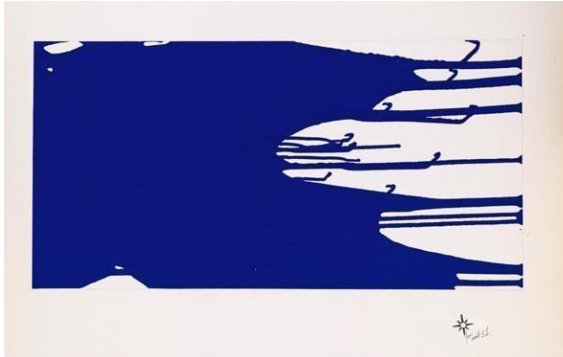


Figure 13 Monochrome blue san titre (coulee) (IKB28), (1957) Yves Klein, This image by Yves Kelin caused contention within A/R/Tography. When I noticed the similarities between the artists work and the collaborative art of Tim and Evan, Evan perceived my intervention as interference remarking, "Oohh feels like a lesson." Prompting me to immediately shut up!

Tim and Evan

I have provided individual case study vignettes for members of the A/R/Tography group followed by analysis and discussion. For my final case study I have chosen to combine the above A/R/Tographers case studies together. The rationale behind this is that within the space they worked in collaboration with each other for the majority of the time. On the occasions that they worked individually, they would always choose to work alongside each other within the space. It seems fitting that when choosing to write their narratives their vignettes are dealt with both collectively and then individually.

Tim

Tim describes himself as a practical hands-on person who has a passion for inventing and creating. Tim spends A/R/Tography realising creations from his imagination through the process of making with cardboard and glue. "I like making with my hands. What the thing looks like in the end is not important to me. I think I am bad at art but I really like to do it! I was told in primary school I was not a very good artist and I have spent my whole life trying to prove everyone wrong." Tim has told me that the social element of A/R/Tography is important to him, as after school there is not much to do where he lives.

Evan

Evan is a quiet student who is Tim's best friend. During A/R/Tography they spend their time making, creating and inventing together. I have observed that Evan has a passion for music and he enjoys sharing his musical tastes with the group. He has told me that he is heavily influenced by his older brother's music listening to bands such as Oasis and ELO. "My family are farmers and we go back loads of generations.

I know I am going to be a farmer when I leave school and don't really care what I get results wise. I like the group because it is fun and social and you don't get told what to do."

I teach both boys photography and am mildly surprised when they turn up at the A/R/Tography group as I had not been aware that they enjoyed art. I initially thought that maybe they had come to enhance their photography skills as they have both taken the subject at G.C.S.E, but it soon became evident that both enjoyed practical hands-on making. For Tim and Evan A/R/Tography appears to be very much a social occasion where ideas on both the art and a multitude of other subjects can be shared. The boys prefer to work collaboratively and as the sessions progress, they venture into experimenting with cardboard, craft knives and glue. There are no pre-made plans for their creations, the ideas appear to come straight out of their imaginations and are realised in the form of cardboard sculptures.

I enjoy watching the boys at work observing how absorbed they are in the task at hand. I recall memories of watching my own son when he was primary school age and the way he and his friends would work collaboratively together to create ambitious constructions fresh from their imagination. One particular session the boys decide to do some painting. I observe them engaging with the materials and slapping the paint onto the surface of the paper. The work appears to be purely processed based and is created quickly and spontaneously without inhibition. There appears to be an element of play at work as the boys experiment with the paint and mark making with no thought for final outcome. Their art is bold, gestural, immediate and expressive.

I am reminded of the work of the artist Yves Klein and show them a picture of the artist's work on my iPad, highlighting the similarities. "Oohhh feels like a lesson," Evan retorts, putting his hand up in mock surrender. His comment throws me, causing me to back off

immediately. I am acutely aware that he has perceived my gesture as interference; a teacher giving him instructions on what to do and referencing unfamiliar artists. I realise Evan really is not interested in the links between his work and the work of other artists. For Evan this is too close to the confines of the curriculum; something he may be asked to comment on within his G.C.S.E photography work. From experience I am aware that he can struggle within lessons. Like Jake, Evan finds it difficult to relate to the concept of assessment objectives and how these objectives co-relate to a grading system. Evan likes to work independently without any outside interference and gets frustrated when this freedom of choice is curtailed or if he perceives that he is being restricted and disciplined. "I like the group because it is fun and social and you don't get told what to do - you have the freedom to do what you want." Evan enjoys the process of making and playing with materials and is not interested in the end result or any intervention or interference from me.

Evan

As we have got to know each other Evan has spoken to me about the jobs that he does on the family dairy farm. He gets up at 4.30 am every school day and doesn't get to bed until 11 pm some nights. He has told me that the job requires lots of heavy lifting and can be demanding but it is his destiny to be a farmer. There have been times when he had turned up at A/R/Tography complaining that his back hurts due to heavy lifting or once with a black eye when he and his elder brother have been fighting. His elder brother is not going into farming and it appears that Evan has taken on adult responsibilities at the age of fourteen. He tells me that he is not particularly interested in education and does not really care what he gets in terms of results. Whether I am teaching him within the Curriculum framework or facilitating work alongside him in A/R/Tography, Evan very much uses his agricultural experiences as his

point of reference. His digital images are filled with pictures of cows and snapshots of everyday life on the farm.

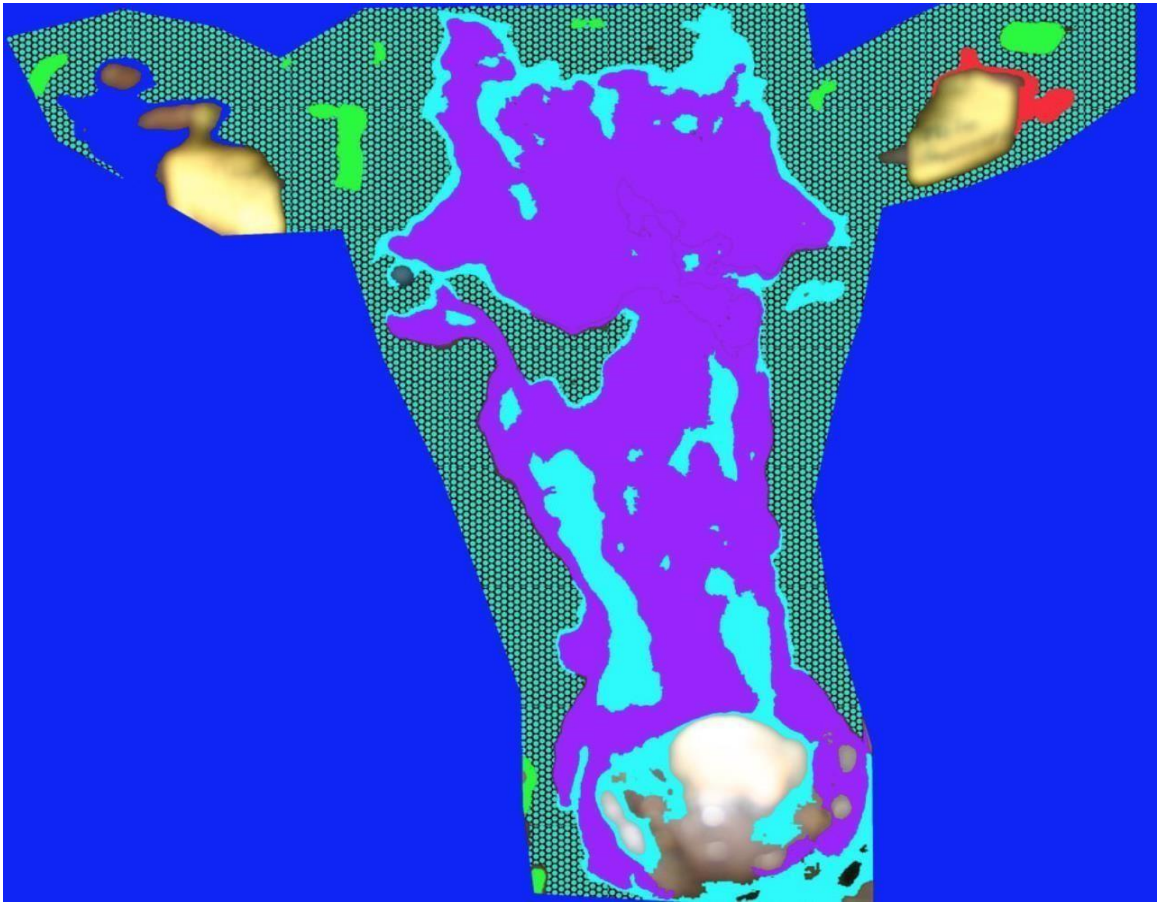


Figure 14 "Psychedelic Cow" (2018)

This piece of digital art was created in an A/R/Tography session experimenting with Photoshop. Evan uses his pre-existing knowledge of Photoshop derived from his G.C.S.E Photography lessons and applies this knowledge within the A/R/Tography space. Evan uses his experiences on the family farm as a point of reference for the creation of his art; bringing his own set of cultural beliefs into the A/R/Tography space (Bourdieu, 1990).

I have been working with Mikey helping him construct his alter-ego, Colin out of felt. Evan comes over to join us and asks if he can make a felt bag. We get out all the materials and he carefully selects the colours that he wishes to use. Aware of the fact that Evan does not like me to interfere, I leave him sitting with materials in each hand deep in thought. I observe this is not his usual spontaneous approach, he appears to be mentally problem solving and am mindful that any interference from me could upset his natural thought process. I continue to help Mikey and suggest to Evan perhaps he would like to show me what he would like to do by drawing a plan. Evan is initially reluctant to do this until I suggest that it may help get the ideas out of his head to show me. As I continue to sew I am consciously not looking at Evan. He picks up a pencil and begins to create a small hand drawn plan. Evan shows me the design and I see a simple square shaped bag design with handles on each side. There is a motif on the front of the drawing of a tractor against a skyline. I talk to Evan about how in order to make the bag I would usually cut out a pattern for each part, then pin the paper to each piece of fabric we would use. Evan does not wish to make a pattern and wants to commence the making immediately.

This is something I have observed about the way Evan works, he is very spontaneous and likes to do things his way. As he begins to cut out the felt I observe his hesitation. I decide to leave him for a moment then suggest that I maybe help do the cutting for him. Evan takes me up on my offer. As I cut we discuss whether he should hand stitch or machine sew his design. This prompts me to ask what experience he has had of sewing. Evan tells me his mum is a seamstress and makes lots of things at home. Once the bag is pinned Evan does not want to tack but move straight onto machine stitching. I show Evan the mechanisms of the machine and as before make a point of leaving him to it. Sometime later he finds me to present the carefully sewn edges of his bag. I reflect on his dexterity with the sewing machine and tell him I am proud of the skills he has shown me.



Figure 15 “It’s Just a Bag Miss!” (2018)

I asked Evan if he wished to give the bag a title for inclusion in the thesis. His bemused reply is a fitting title for the work! A/R/Tography afforded Evan the opportunity to experiment with materials. Evan chose to create a textile bag with an applique of a tractor standing as a disobedient force against his cultural habitus (Atkinson, 2018; Bourdieu, 1990).

Tim

Tim arrives at A/R/Tography without Evan. He tells me that he has the Machine Mart Catalogue with him to get inspiration for his art. The catalogue is packed full with images of tools and machinery. Through the previous conversations I have had with Tim, I know how he has a shed at home where he likes to make things and in particular to take his bike apart to make modifications. Tim tells me that he makes hybrid tables and chairs out of wood in his shed. "I use bits of broken furniture and put it back together in a different way." Through observing Tim, I note that he comes into school and applies his practical knowledge of mechanics and assembling to his art making skills. Tim always works with cardboard, craft knives and a glue gun. I have brought a book in from home on cardboard art for him to look at. Tim flicks through each page with a cursory glance until his eyes settle on a cardboard invention whose purpose is to produce replicas of itself, each one smaller than the next, like a Russian Doll. The machine is not functional and is purely ideas based. There is a humour to the work that seems to appeal to Tim and smiling he announces that he is going to create, "something which will go bang". Tim sets to work making his creation with cardboard, a glue gun and wool. Observing Tim I note he is very quick and spontaneous in the way he creates and does not stop to measure or make plans. Tim wants to work with the handling of materials and his responses are impulsive and intuitive. I ask Tim, as he enjoys making so much, why he did not take art and design or design technology as an option for his G.C.S.Es. He tells me, "Mum didn't think I would do well in it. She is quite over-protective of me and is worried about my results."



Figure 16 "The Machine That Goes Bang! (2018)

The artwork is very much spontaneous and process-based which is typical of Tim's style of working. There is a playful element to his creation and it does not take itself too seriously. Watching Tim engage with materials, I am reminded of watching my youngest son at play.

I find myself disappointed that he has missed out on the opportunity to do something that he evidently gets pleasure out of within curriculum time. I teach Tim for photography and know the he has support with literacy and has been diagnosed with dyspraxia. However his perceived difference has done nothing to curtail his enthusiasm for making and creating.

Initial examination of the text would suggest that both boys enjoyed engaging with materials and practical hands on making free from curriculum constraints. Evan told me that he was a farmer and Tim described himself as, “a practical, hands on person”. Dewey (1938) and Eisner (1991) suggest that this sensory interaction creates meaning and this would appear to be what occurred when Tim and Evan worked experimenting, both collaboratively and independently, engaging with materials. Adams and Owens (2016) claim that, “...practice is indistinguishable from either thinking or from material production” (p.3).

The idea autonomous relationships are created between the sensory, intellectual and the process of making appears to be what has occurred in this instance. Through observation I observe Tim applied his practical knowledge of mechanics and assembling to his art making skills. Evan used his experiences and knowledge of farming as a stimulus for his art. Eisner (1991) identifies this as the “transactive account” that is the way that humans negotiate a meaningful space for themselves between the subjective and objective divide. This concept of knowledge being generated through the process of making is, in my experience, something that occurred within the A/R/Tography space. Multi-disciplinary connections were made through making both individually and collectively (Irwin, 2004). Both Tim and Evan worked voluntarily outside of the curriculum, subjecting themselves to the learning process, a prerequisite for democratic learning spaces (Dewey 1938).

Tim stated, "I think I am bad at art but I really like to do it!" This supports the research of Adams and Owens (2016) who, "...encounter the perennial problem of children's loss of confidence and disillusionment with their drawing ability, a culturally dominant trend in the UK...a scenario familiar to many mainstream art educators" (p.74). However, additionally in Tim's case, a teacher in his primary school told him he was, "not a very good artist." This corresponds with the research of Ranciere (2010b) who asserts that the teacher is seen as the keeper of knowledge and the explicator. Within the primary school setting, Tim looked to his teacher as the person in authority for verification of his abilities and was met with a negative response. The fact that Tim went on to say he has spent his, "...whole life trying to prove everyone wrong." is telling of the impact negative hierarchical teacher student relationships has had on his experience of education. Similarities can be found here with Bourdieu (1993) and his theory of habitus. Bourdieu proposes that dispositions are acquired in the formative years of an individual's upbringing and are very much linked to social experiences formulated in childhood. In Tim's case the experience of being told he was, "not a very good artist." By becoming an A/R/Tographer and creating art, Tim used understanding of his habitus as a "new gaze" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) to, "prove everyone wrong" (Grenfell, 2003).

When Tim has made his cardboard creation, I asked why he did not take art as an option he told me, "...mum did not think I would do well in it. She is quite overprotective of me and is worried about my results." hooks (1994; 2003) argues that dominant essentialist standpoints govern the school and that there is an adversarial culture bred within the classroom environment where students are pitted against each other in such a way that it can have a dehumanizing effect on them. The data suggests that the ability for Tim to do well in results was the priority when electing to take subjects at G.C.S.E level rather than Tim's enjoyment of the subject. This is pertinent to the theories of Adams

(2018) who argues neoliberal economics have resulted in education being based around performance. hooks (2010) advocates “wholeness” where students can be themselves and that engaged pedagogy is the key to a free, democratic education. hooks urges teachers to transgress boundaries so that the classroom can become a “radical space of possibility” (p.12). Tim and Evan were afforded such a space and were free to create self-generated art within the A/R/Tography space (Wilson, 2003).

I observed that, for Tim and Evan, A/R/Tography appeared to be very much a social occasion as can be found in Reggio Emilia and Room 13 models of learning. This indicates that the structure of A/R/Tography as an informal learning space allowed them to spontaneously engage with materials free from curriculum constraints and inhibitions. Within the space, a/r/tographic practices enabled boundaries to be blurred between perceptions of the quality of outcomes and the focus was on process of making and the accompanying narrative (Irwin, 2004). As mentioned within my analysis of Mikey, there were similarities between Tim and Evan and their approach to playing with materials. This was exemplified by their experimentation when handling paint and the spontaneous way Tim engaged with cardboard to create his, *machine that goes bang*. I observed that they work quickly and their art is bold, gestural, immediate and expressive. The way in which the boys engage with materials highlights how we create meaning through sensory interaction with the world around us (Eisner, 1991). Through experimenting with creating, I would argue that they engage in some basic level of play (Eisner, 1991). Bourriaud (2002) concurs likening artistic activity to a game whose functions, forms and patterns evolve in accordance with the social context. This visual image of the boys at play prompted me to recall memories of watching my own son working collaboratively with his friends on creations of art. My own system of cultural beliefs were brought into the space relating the occurring phenomena to my own structural code of lived experience (Bourdieu,

2010); this is the relationship between habitus and field. The field was observing the boys playing with materials and habitus, the experience of watching my young son at play (Bourdieu, 1990c). I used the knowledge of my own sociological gaze to help transform my way of seeing for the benefit of the A/R/Tographers (Greenfell, 2008).



Figure 17 “Josh Drawing” (2014)

This observational sketch was created when my youngest son was eight years old. When Joshua was primary school age, he was not particularly interested in writing and made sense of the world around him through drawing. He would create visual stories on pieces of paper talking to me about the unfolding narratives fresh from his imagination.

Although I inhabited the role of the person in authority, the boys negotiated and understood the rules of the A/R/Tography making space creating a sense of ownership. This is indicative of a, “habitual model of learning derived through participative practices...where authority resides in the learning environment” (Adams & Owens 2016, p.15). An example of this occurring is when I attempted to direct Evan to the work of Yves Klein. The incident revealed to me that I needed to suppress my instinct to actively construct learning opportunities and believe that students had the ability to work independently of me (Adams & Owens, 2016 p.8). Traditional roles were challenged when I advised Evan that the image reminded me of his painting. His retort was defensive and alluded to the fact I was acting from a position where I had authority, “...Oohh feels like a lesson.” This revealed that the “conditions for creative practices to flourish depend on the democratic principles being established within the space” (Adams & Owens 2016, p.7). From my perspective I showed him the work as someone who had a passion for art and wanted to share a similarity within the work. Evan perceived me as reverting to the role of explicator (Ranciere, 1991), imparting my knowledge on him and assuming the role of keeper of knowledge. This highlights that within the confines of the study I still retained and struggled with the impulse to be the provider of knowledge and was not mindful of learning being a voluntary process within the space (Dewey, 1938).

The incident demonstrated that Evan had opposing views on learning and perceived my interjection as an infringement to his creative freedom as opposed to being a holistic process. By rejecting my desire to impart knowledge on him and assume a teacher student role, Evan chose to act disobediently questioning the pedagogical knowledge I wished to impart on him (Atkinson, 2018). Therefore this enabled him to challenge established forms of knowledge.

In my reflections I note that Evan had difficulty relating to the concept of assessment objectives within the curriculum and how these objectives co-related to the grading system. Evan's work was process based and developed and flowed in many directions as is common in Reggio pedagogy. Vecchi (2010) argues that a word for this approach is not easy to define in English. Although "emergent curriculum" is near, this does not encapsulate the 'otherness' of Reggio and it is therefore referred to in the Italian word '*progettazione*' (Vecchi, 2010 p.xiii). This allowed the learning to be tailored to Evan's individual needs some of which he accepted, some which he did not, as is evidenced in the aforesaid incident.

The data suggests that freedom of choice was important to both Tim and Evan and this can be likened to the notion of disobedient pedagogies as discoursed by Atkinson (2018). Both Tim and Evan harnessed this disobedience in terms of the way they chose to express themselves through their self-generated art. Evan's felt bag and Tim's *machine that goes bang* stood as disobedient artefacts against conformity and the demands of the curriculum (Atkinson, 2018). Evan had grown up within an agricultural family going back many generations and managed working on the farm with attending school. This is indicative of formulations of habitus in childhood, which have acted as a sociological constraint on Evan (Bourdieu, 1993). Within A/R/Tography Evan chose to create a textile bag with an applique of a tractor standing as a disobedient force against his cultural habitus. For Tim the artwork represented his desire to make and create art without permission or curriculum constraints. Vecchi (2010) places emphasis on the importance of the visual articulation of language. This is pertinent to how we communicate and express our thinking through, "...different media and symbolic systems" (p.9). This spontaneous way of working was embraced by me as facilitator. (Wilson 2003) and appeared to be what occurred within the A/R/Tography space.

Evan's habitus is pertinent to his approach to education and there is an element of pre-destination to his life (Bourdieu,1990). He told me, "I know I am going to be a farmer when I leave school and don't really care what I get results wise." As we became more familiar, Evan talked to me about his life on the farm and I observed that Evan used his experiences as a point of reference. Evan brought his own set of cultural beliefs into the A/R/Tography space and into his narratives with me (Bourdieu,1990). Evan employed the use of referents from his own culture to negotiate social relations and phenomena occurring within the A/R/Tography space. According to Bourdieu (1984) such experiences are, "...invisible relationships...obscured by the realities of ordinary sense experience" (p.22).

Therefore Evan's individual history, pre-conceptions and life experiences acted as his referent for dealing with external matters. Within the Reggio Emilia framework, Vecchi (2010) discusses how the external reality that young people bring to school needs to be consciously considered when supporting students, as does knowing when to talk and when to listen (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). This is pertinent to when I worked alongside Evan in the creation of his felt bag. Due to previous experience working alongside Evan, I was mindful that he did not want me to lead him, so I allowed myself to be intuitively led by him through reading body language and verbal responses (Miller, 2005). hooks (2003) argues that optimal learning cannot and will not occur without acknowledgement of the emotional presence and wholeness of students; where learning is about sharing information listening and hearing individual voices. Therefore I needed to be in tune with the needs of Evan in order to help facilitate the learning process.

Miller (2005), suggests that, "The most effective communication occurs when verbal and non-verbal messages are synchronised when student and teacher are working together to form a symbiotic relationship. On examination of the text it would appear this is what occurred in my

interactions with Evan. The emergent themes from this vignette are that Evan liked to be self-directed in his work and learning for him in A/R/Tography was voluntary (Dewey, 1938). Jeffs and Smith (2015) speak about the educator knowing, "...When the talk begins...and how best to include the shy and manage the overly garrulous" (p.38). Adams (2013) argues that it is a prerequisite of democratic learning that the rights and responsibilities of the learner are incorporated within Dewey's model of progressive education. This would appear to be how I negotiated the role of facilitator throughout the making process, mindful of reading the dynamics of our interactions.

In this chapter I have introduced the reader to each A/R/Tographer through the use of case study and reflective vignettes. Each vignette is followed by analysis and discussion employing the theorists referenced in the theoretical landscape. It is now my intention to focus on three critical incidents which occurred within the research project to further inform the readers understanding of how A/R/Tography collectively functioned.

Chapter Four The Life Cycle of A/R/Tography

Introduction

This thesis centres round the creation of an informal making space and explores relationships that arise out of the setting. My research is a study concerning individual and collective experiences in attending the A/R/Tography group. The previous chapter allowed the individual voices of the A/R/Tographers to be heard, and I now wish to focus on the group as a whole through reflective vignettes created in response to four critical incidents occurring during the course of the research. The first vignette focuses on the commencement of A/R/Tography, and explores arising tensions when applying democratic principles within an educational setting. The second vignette explores my personal response to narratives arising out of the space, and the impact on my pedagogy. The third vignette centres round a trip to Tate Exchange, Liverpool where the A/R/Tographers work alongside international doctoral students and participate in Tate's creative process. The fourth vignette is focussed on the A/R/Tographers collective experiences and responses to the research project coming to a conclusion. Each vignette is followed by my critical reflections interwoven with supporting literature (Al Sadi & Basit, 2017).

The relationships arising out of creative practices were at the crux of the thesis, and the research questions are embedded in, and from the dialogue and actions taking place within the A/R/Tography group. As mentioned previously, during the course of the research project as a fellow A/R/Tographer, I was completely immersed in the field of study. As discussed in the research methodology chapter, the use of case study has enabled me to provide an authentic account of participant experience (Simons, 2009), whilst being as Stake (2006) writes,

“noninterventive and empathic” (p.12).



Figure 18 “Creativity, Unique, Unity, Passion, A/R/Tography” (2018) This piece of Collaborative artwork was created within the maker space at Tate Exchange, Liverpool. We are proudly wearing our A/R/Tography Tshirts and the yarn around the side of the image was hand knitted in collaboration with a fellow doctoral student from Lapland.

Who Is In Charge Anyway?

The first A/R/Tography session is taking place in an hour's time. *I am apprehensive, questioning myself as to whether young people will want to engage in the project.* I have been struggling internally with how I could possibly transform my traditional art classroom into a more democratic learning space within the confines of a school setting. After some consideration, I decide to re-arrange tables and seating to hopefully encourage a less formal, communal working space. Sweets are laid out, music turned on as I wait anxiously to see who will turn up. The bell to signify the end of the school day sounds, and slowly but surely students begin to arrive, some familiar faces, others not. I recognise a few very able students who excel within the art curriculum framework, others I know, but would not immediately assume would be interested in joining an art group. This highlighted to me immediately that the A/R/Tography Collective would consist not only of students taking art as a G.C.S.E option, but self-selecting students who wished to create art outside of the curriculum framework. Jake is the first to arrive and I am glad he has decided to show up. When I initially mentioned the group he was very enthusiastic. However, in my experience he can struggle with social situations, so his presence is welcome. In the past I have witnessed verbal altercations with his peers, and am pleased he has decided to join a group. Jake sits next to where I am seated and begins to flick through the images on his phone. He talks about how it is the new Samsung model and directs me to pictures of his nieces and family on the screen.

I am faintly surprised by the presence of Tim and Evan. I teach both students G.C.S.E photography but was not aware that they enjoyed art. Through observing the students within lesson time, I knew that they were good friends as they sit together in class. They do the work that is required of them, but had never struck me as particularly enthusiastic when it came to making and creating. I observe the boys sit down immediately at the table set up with the Lego and delve into the process of making, talking amiably to each other without inhibition, something

that I had not observed within curriculum time. Lenny and Alice arrive together. I recognise Alice as a quiet, studious student whom I teach G.C.S.E photography. The class she is in can be particularly challenging, and I know her as a well-behaved student who can always be relied on to get on with work. Lenny's face is familiar and I recall him from a class I team-teach with a colleague but I do not know him well. Mikey arrives a short time later, apologetic for being late, worried that the group will clash with his Duke of Edinburgh bronze award meeting. He heads straight towards Evan and Tim who are in the same year group as him. My carefully arranged seating has done nothing to encourage students to mix, and everyone sits in clusters within their social groups.

Everyone begins to talk amongst themselves, phones in hands punctuating the room with occasional laughter. The radio is playing and the noise level from the students is rising to compete with the music. Raising my voice I begin to talk, mindful that I do not wish to dampen the mood by turning the music off, nor assume the role of teacher. *However, I do feel the need for some level of authority within the setting.* I am acutely aware that the head of department is working in the adjacent open plan classroom, and do not wish the noise levels to disturb her. I begin to speak thanking everyone for coming along and talking to them about the ideas behind the creation of the A/R/Tography group. It is an unfamiliar experience to see students eyes flicker from me to their phones constantly. I have to suppress the urge to assume the role of authoritarian teacher and allow students the freedom to check their phones. As I go through the research design and the purpose of the study, I reiterate the fact that the A/R/Tographers will have the freedom to create any kind of art that they wish to within the space, (as is common in Room 13 and Reggio Emilia models of learning situations). Lenny interjects asking can he do digital art and when I nod, gets very excited exclaiming, "We don't do stuff like that in school!" Everyone is given a sticker on which to write names. The rationale being people get to know each other, but also to encourage A/R/Tographers to see me as

an artist rather than their class teacher. I too write my name down and invite the A/R/Tographers to call me by my first name. Jake finds it hilarious exclaiming incredulously, "...imagine if I called you Lindsey in a lesson!" The other A/R/Tographers toy with using my first name, but it soon becomes apparent that this does not feel comfortable for them. After a few sessions, I am soon back to being called Miss and do not feel the need to keep labouring the point of inviting the A/R/Tographers to call me by my first name.



Figure 19 “Discarding my Teacher Self” (2017)

I took this image 5 minutes before the A/R/Tographers arrived for their first session. I was feeling apprehensive as to what would happen next and had the urge to fold up my teacher uniform ceremoniously into a pile, topped with my shoes and lanyard to mark the occasion.

I suggest that they may wish to take off their coats or ties but no one takes me up on the offer. I myself have made a point of changing out

of my work clothes into something more casual in order to shed something of my teacher persona with a view to being perceived as an artist, rather than an educator. My identity badge and regulation school uniform has been discarded in readiness for the first A/R/Tography session. School policy does not allow tattoos to be visible and for me as an individual they form an integral part of my identity. I welcome the opportunity the A/R/Tography space affords me to not have to consciously hide my tattooed arms under long sleeved garments. As the hour progresses, everyone begins to settle into each other's company. I spend my time moving from group to group, collecting art materials when requested and listening to the students talk to me about their ideas of what they would like to make and create. I observe that Tim has got out a small pocket torch to examine the mechanisms of some technical Lego and Evan is engrossed in carefully making a model of a car. I am interested to note how engaged in the process of making the boys are, seemingly the opposite to their engagement within the confines of their photography classes. I walk over to Evan and ask to take a look at his car design. Evan replies that it has been destroyed stating, "it was rubbish." He impulsively grabs a paintbrush and paper off the table and begins to draw a character stating, "I am rubbish at drawing." A couple of minutes later his drawing is complete.

Time goes fast and there is no occasion for me to make and create alongside the A/R/Tographers. The Lego sculpture I began at the commencement of A/R/Tography lies half complete on the table. As the session draws to a close, I begin to write up my notes and reflect. *I feel slightly disappointed that I have not been able to make alongside A/R/Tographers and be given the opportunity to work as an artist within the space. However, after observing and participating within the group, my instinct is telling me that the A/R/Tographers need me there in the capacity of something else.* I resolve that as the group becomes more established I will introduce my own art practice to the group, hoping this may act as a springboard for the creation of collaborative work.



Figure 20 "Beardy Man" (2017)

Beardy Man was a character created by Evan minutes after him stating, "I am rubbish at drawing". This is comparable to what occurs within the Room 13 environment where adults, "...encounter the perennial problem of children's loss of confidence and disillusionment with their drawing ability, a culturally dominant trend in the UK." (p.74). Evan's work is very spontaneous and process based and he moves quickly with whatever materials are available to hand.

The purpose of the research project was to allow A/R/Tographers the opportunity to have creative agency outside of the confines of the curriculum. The study was designed to encourage freedom and democracy to flourish. However, through analysis of the data it became apparent that it was I who was initially a hindrance to this process, due to my conflicting roles of teacher and artist within the research. As I prepared for the first session, I arranged seating and tried to control and curate the space in an attempt to encourage the A/R/Tographers to submit to my pre-conceptions as to what I perceived a democratic learning space should look like. This highlights my subconscious need to control the learning environment (Adams & Owens, 2016). I stated that I was surprised by the diversity within the group and was, “faintly surprised by the presence of Tim and Evan,” as I was not aware that they enjoyed art through their demeanor in a traditional classroom setting. Subconsciously, I had decided the type of young person who would be participating in the research using my traditional teacher lens.

This can be likened to the concept of habitus where individuals become subconsciously trapped within their own cultural field (Bourdieu, 2010). In this particular case, I used my own teacher preconceptions, which obscured my perception of what type of student would be attending A/R/Tography (Bourdieu, 1984 p.22). Bourdieu (2010) asserts that we are all a product of our individual histories and bring pre-conceptions and life experiences with us when dealing with external matters. This would suggest that I exhibited traditional concepts of power where the teacher is the keeper of knowledge (Ranciere, 2010b). This power relationship was also at play when I observed wryly that my, “carefully arranged” seating plan had not encouraged students to mix. This is reminiscent of the work of Dewey (1938) and Adams and Owens (2016) who suggest that teachers impose their own authority on teaching situations and I did not believe in the ability of the A/R/Tographers to understand and create their own rules.

When students initially arrived at the first session music was playing, the A/R/Tographers' were on their phones and the noise levels are rising. I expressed my discomfort at the lack of discipline within the environment and assumed control of the class by exerting my authority through my voice and presence within the setting. I immediately assumed the hierarchical role of teacher, a role I was familiar with to interact with the A/R/Tographers, going against the principles of Dewey (1938) and his views on teachers imposing their authority for fear of chaos. Therefore not trusting in students to have sufficient understanding of the rules. Through analysis of the data, it is evident that the students were more comfortable than me with this level of freedom working outside of the curriculum, evidenced by their chatting whilst I was talking and interacting with their mobile phones. These are patterns of behaviour that would not be perceived as acceptable during the formal confines of a lesson, demonstrating my inner conflict when relating the phenomena to the structural code of my lived experiences (Bourdieu, 2010). Despite my principles of freedom and democracy within the classroom, it is I who initially struggled within the unfamiliar territory of democratic learning frameworks.

All A/R/Tographers were entirely self-selecting creating what Jeffs and Smith (2005) refer to as a "Culturally Specific" group (p.30). This suggested that a pedagogical visual culture site was created by the A/R/Tographers forming a bridge between the traditional teaching site and their self-generated art (Wilson, 2003). This self-generated art was revealed as Tim and Evan began to play with the Lego free of inhibition. This would suggest that the space allowed for diversity and afforded the A/R/Tographers space to pursue their own interests (Atkinson & Dash, 2005; Wilson, 2003). I mentioned that Jake's presence was welcome within A/R/Tography, as I knew he could struggle in social situations. It is telling that he sat next to me and began to talk about images on his phone, suggesting he is comfortable in my presence, initially demonstrated by him choosing to sit next to me rather than his peers.

Eisner (2002) suggests that the arts enable students to transform qualities of experience into speech and text – its linguistic counterpart. Miller (2005) asserts that words have limitations and not only are nonverbal signals more powerful but are also more genuine. It would therefore appear that Jake felt comfortable within my presence through his use of body language.

At the introduction of the first session I made a point of explaining the purpose of the research project to the students and telling them that they were free to create any kind of art that they wished to within the space. This aligns with the research of Dewey (1938) and Adams and Owens (2016) who make reference to effectively establishing democratic principles in order for creative practices to flourish. It would take time for both the A/R/Tographers and me to adjust to the disruption of traditional boundaries and forge new principles of democratic education within the A/R/Tography setting. This is proven through ingrained behaviours exhibited by both the A/R/Tographers' and me. Lenny placed me in a hierarchal role and sought my permission to create his own self-generated art, despite me making it clear A/R/Tographers had the freedom to do anything that they wished. This is evidenced through Lenny asking for permission to make digital art and his response of, "We don't do stuff like that in school!" The data suggests that Lenny needed permission to break the rules. Atkinson (2018) refers to this as disobedience, retaliation to the lack of freedom within the curriculum framework. There was also evidence that the A/R/Tographers were struggling with ingrained perceptions of what a teaching space should look like due to their own structural code of lived experience aligning with the theories of Bourdieu (2010). This is referred to as the relationship between habitus and field. The field being the social context of the school in which the subjective experience of the individual is applied (Bourdieu, 1990c).

Traditional hierarchal roles were initially at play as evidenced by Jake's incredulity towards me when I requested that I be referred to by my first

name. The data suggests that Jake is conforming to a social constraint through the use of language (Bernstein, 1971). Bernstein (1966) goes further to argue that, "Different forms of social relations can generate different speech-systems or linguistic codes" (p.254). By referring to me as "Miss" Jake upholds a system of power where the inference is that I am the more educated, therefore, language is being used to reinforce subordination (Bernstein, 1966). However, the above is counteracted by the knowledge on Jake's part that although first name terms may not be acceptable within the confines of the curriculum, my position within the A/R/Tography space is different. The data suggests that it was neither possible for me nor the A/R/Tographers to move away from the role of me as teacher, due to their discomfort referring to me by my first name within the A/R/Tography setting. To labour the issue went against the principles upon which the research project was designed. As discussed in the literature review, there was a hierarchal nature to the student teacher relationship (Adams & Owens 2016; Ranciere 1991). I would assert that even if the A/R/Tographers did not see me as their teacher within A/R/Tography and did not refer to me as "Miss", at best I would be viewed as the adult in the room and assume this role subconsciously.

When I observed Tim and Evan engaged in the process of making and creating, I was struck by the difference in their behaviour within curriculum time. Correspondingly the theories of Wilson (2003), claim that by coercing students to do something that is not self-initiated can destroy their interest. Comparisons can also be drawn here to the theories of Eisner (1991) in relation to the way in which the boys engaged and played with materials, highlighting how meaning was created through sensory interaction with the world around us. Through experimenting with creating, I would argue that they engaged with some basic level of play (Eisner, 1991). Bourriaud (2002) concurs likening artistic activity to a game whose functions, forms and patterns evolve in accordance with the social context (p.11). The analysis of data suggests that once lesson objectives and skill base were removed, Tim and Evan

spontaneously engaged with materials, free from constraints and inhibitions. What is interesting to note is that once Evan was aware that he was being observed painting and I asked to see it, he told me that it has been destroyed because, “it was rubbish”. Correspondingly, the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) observe that adults working in the Room 13 environment, “...encounter the perennial problem of children’s loss of confidence and disillusionment with their drawing ability, a culturally dominant trend in the UK, frequently accompanied by the proclamation: ‘I can’t draw’” (p.74). The overtly critical response to his drawing abilities could be indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism in Western governments’ educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016), with its emphasis on a prescriptive art curriculum with prescribed outcomes.

In the first session, I spent my time moving from group to group, collecting art materials when requested and listening to students talk about their ideas and what they wished to create, therefore inhabiting the role of facilitator. It was necessary for me to adapt to new methods of working within a space outside of the curriculum where the environment developed into the place of power and authority (Adams & Owens, 2016; Dewey, 1938). I responded to the needs of the individual, rather than conforming to conditions set by the environment (Dewey, 1938).



Figure 21 "ICD-10" (2010)

This was my first autobiographical piece of art made in response to my father's chronic alcoholism. The whisky bottles are spray-painted garish colours to represent false joviality, disguising the problems of addiction. The words scratched into the charred wooden frame are taken from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases for alcoholism.

Making the Invisible - Visible

It is the third session of A/R/Tography and I have decided to discuss my own art practice. When I initially visualised the research project, I had a preconception that I would be creating art alongside the A/R/Tographers. However, over the course of the first two sessions, my time has been taken up facilitating the A/R/Tographers' work. *I feel slightly frustrated that I have not had the opportunity to share my own art practice.* My sketchbooks are laid out on the table and I have brought in examples of my own art. *I am surprised to find myself nervous about sharing my body of work.* There is no formal teacher persona or power point to hide behind. *I am apprehensive about how my art will be received, would the students understand my work? Would they even be interested?* I begin to speak, flicking through my sketchbooks, pointing to images of artwork, explaining how my ideas had developed. Everyone is politely listening, although no one takes me up on the offer to look through my sketchbooks. *I can't shake the feeling that somehow my role has switched back to that of teacher, and the A/R/Tographers as listeners, receptacles of information that I am imparting to them.* This is unintentional on my part, however, in my mind, it highlights the fragility of the roles.

During a lull in my talk Jake begins to speak. He tells everyone he bought a computer game over the weekend for his dad so they could play together, as he is no longer living at home. When he next saw his dad with the gift he didn't want to play with him. Jake goes on to say he is glad his dad is not living with them anymore because he didn't do anything with him anyway. Evan interjects saying that his dad is a shouter and throws things a lot and maybe it's a good thing Jake's dad doesn't live with him anymore. Alice starts to talk about her dad who has left home and how she is not sure whether she wants to see him again. "Are you at war with your dad?" Lenny interjects. Alice nods, "Me too!" Everyone gives each other a high five. On impulse, prompted

by the conversation that has taken place, I search for an image of a piece of work I created named “ICD-10”. This particular artwork was my first autobiographical piece, made in response to my father’s chronic alcoholism. I talk about the relevance of the spray-painted whisky bottles, painted garish colours to represent false joviality, disguising the problems of addiction underneath; how the words scratched into the charred wooden frame are taken from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases for alcoholism. I speak about how the work was made in response to the sense of disempowerment and frustration I felt at witnessing his decline and how through the process of making the artwork, I was visually articulating my feelings; trying to make sense and order out of the chaos and disorder in my family life. The A/R/Tographers are listening to me and are taking a real interest in the piece and my accompanying dialogue. *I am surprised at my willingness to disclose such a personal piece of information, and feel that something has shifted in terms of how the A/R/Tographers and I perceive each other.* The members of the A/R/Tography group created a dialogue around their relationships with their fathers, and I reciprocated with my own lived experiences.

As the students leave the session for the evening, I reflect on the conversations that have taken place. I recognise how important it is that the A/R/Tographers have a space where they can make, talk and create freely. My role within the group is that of a facilitator to enable the above to take place. I come to the conclusion that my individual creativity does not have to be expressed through the creation of my own physical artefacts, but will be visible through my engagement with the A/R/Tographers and my creative role in assisting them to visually articulate and realise their own ideas.

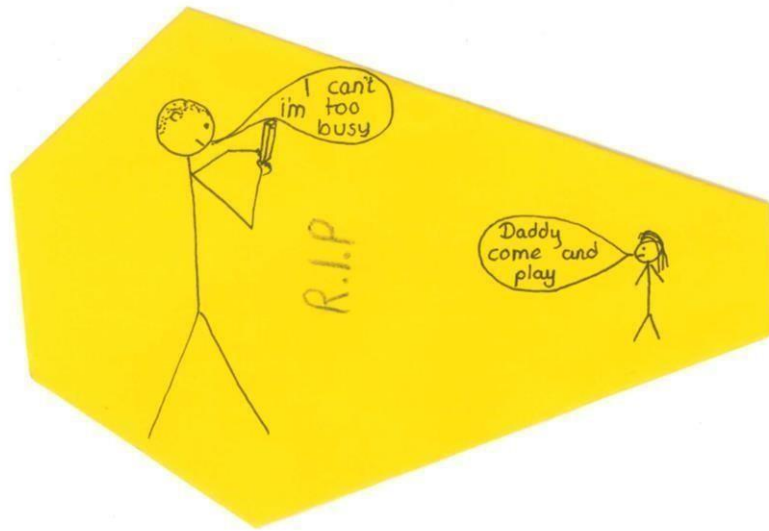


Figure 22 "I can't I'm too busy" (2017)

At the conclusion of this particular A/R/Tography session, I found this piece of Art left out on a table. It stands as a visual articulation of the narratives arising out of the space. This suggests the occurrence of Relational Art defined as, "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context" (Bourriaud, 2002 p.133).

The hierarchal nature of student teacher relationships was omnipresent (Adams & Owens, 2016; Ranciere, 1991; Bourdieu, 2010) as I, as the educator, attempted to curate the making space, bringing my own preconceptions and assumptions of what the research project should look like into the A/R/Tography space. The fact that I wished to assert my artist teacher identity within the space, suggested a frustration on my part with curriculum constraints and a desire to dissent as I endeavoured to disrupt the regulative power of the school setting (Atkinson, 2018). Taking an a/r/tographic approach to my research involved me facing divisions in my identity as an artist, researcher and teacher (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004 p.105) and the data suggested that I struggled with this inner tension at the commencement of the project, subconsciously working against the spirit of the research design.

As Jake began to talk unprompted about his relationship with his father, he asserted his right to assert his citizenship within the space and disrupts normal societal roles (Adams & Owens, 2016). When Jake spoke about his father, it instigated a group conversation about other individual members' relationships with their own fathers. Both the students and I actively listened to each other therefore helping to facilitate individual empowerment (hooks 2010). I would assert that by choosing to reveal the artwork *ICD-10* was a pivotal moment in the study. The theories of Bourriaud (2002) are pertinent as, although the piece of art was a retrospective piece of work, it was created to prompt dialogue and discussion in relation to its human and social context; the issue of my father's alcoholism. A/r/tographic practices were in evidence as the A/R/Tographers responded to the artwork *ICD-10* through the use of narratives (Bickell, 2006). hooks (2010) highlights the importance of sharing stories so the onus is not always on the student to confess. By making my personal identity visible a common entry point was found (p.18). The A/R/Tographers' reaction was positive and they took a real interest in what I was saying. hooks (2010) makes the point that everybody always remembers a good conversation

and meaningful conversations occur when learners are in a comfortable space. Parental relationships and alcoholism are subjects that could be perceived as risky within the school environment (Adams, 2010; hooks 1994). However, as can be found in Room 13 and Reggio Emilia models of democratic learning, the research suggests that A/R/Tography provided a safe space for members to articulate issues that affected their lives (Souness & Fairley, 2005). There simply would not be a voice for such issues to be articulated within the confines of the curriculum.

The sharing of information disrupted the traditional hierarchal nature of the student teacher relationship and not only enabled A/R/Tographers to see me as a person, but provided me with an insight into each individuals lived experiences. Van Manen & Li (2002) refer to this as acknowledging individuality and the whole being of students (p.294). Uitto (2012) asserts that teachers, personal lives inevitably become visible to students through their values and beliefs and the data suggests that, through the sharing of stories students could see that there is a way through a traumatic event (p.296). By revealing personal information about myself I was seen as authentic by the A/R/Tographers (Jeffs and Smith, 2005). Therefore the A/R/Tographers believed in my authenticity as the facilitator in order for A/R/Tography to function as a democratic learning space.

The above incident prompted me to recognise the importance of A/R/Tographers' having a space to meet, talk and create. I reflected on my role within the space and came to the conclusion that I needed to take on the role of facilitator. Through the sharing of personal information, a space was created where open dialogue was promoted through conversation and contribution (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). This can be likened to the models of democratic learning spaces of Room 13 and Reggio Emilia. This role is referred to in the Reggio Emilia model as *atelierista* (Vecchi, 2010 p.12). The identity of teacher and artist became blurred and I existed within a space between both. Not, *atelistra* (Vecchi,

2010 p.12), but rather an arts facilitator. By not conforming to the traditional expectations and role of teacher I exerted a disobedient pedagogy within the parameters of the space (Atkinson, 2018). As an educator I began to explore ways in which to adapt to new methods of working within a space outside of the curriculum where the environment developed into the place of power and authority (Adams and Owens 2016; Dewey 1938). I acknowledged the emotional presence of the A/R/Tographers and the importance of listening and sharing information, aligning with the theories of hooks (2003). However I also worked within a space, which existed on the periphery of personal and professional relationships with students and continually negotiated this boundary (Uitto, 2012).

Jeffs and Smith (2005) make the link between democracy and open dialogue, spaces to be used to promote conversation and contribution. An example of this is when family tensions were discussed within a group setting. Jake used the space to voice the issues he had with his father prompting Alice and Lenny to interject with, "Are you at war with your dad?...Me too!". This is a recurring theme with Lenny speaking about his tense relationship with his father. In the literature review, Souness and Fairley (2005) argue that adults are more uncomfortable being presented with these outcomes than the students are at visually articulating them. In my professional experience, a discussion such as this could not have had the space to be articulated or heard within the confines of the curriculum. It became apparent that once the hierarchal boundaries between student and teacher are challenged, making spaces of discourse opened up that enabled A/R/Tographers to discuss issues which affected their everyday lives (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). Uitto (2012) argues that teachers' personal lives inevitably become visible to students through their values and beliefs. This was evidenced through the conversation that took place with the A/R/Tographers regarding this particular issue.

Tate Exchange

A/R/Tography has been running for a month, when I am invited by my thesis supervisor to participate in Tate Exchange with my fellow A/R/Tographers. Tate Exchange is an annual international exhibition held at Tate Liverpool, which allows organisations and members of the public to participate in the Tate's creative process, running events and projects on site and using art as a way of addressing wider issues in the world. Tate Exchange consists of a partnership of five universities from around the world, coming together to investigate art-based educational research and explore how this facilitates socially engaged art education in a time of globalization. I am invited to participate in my capacity as a doctoral student with my fellow A/R/Tographers, and use the Exchange space for a day to engage practically and creatively, collaborating with fellow doctoral students and members of the public. Participation in Tate Exchange is of particular relevance to my research as its aims are to explore innovative approaches to arts-based education. The purpose of my study is to allow students the space to question key issues relevant to themselves as individuals and the wider picture of society. Although I initially agree to participate in principle, I first need to ascertain what my fellow A/R/Tographers' feelings were towards being part of the project. I broach the subject in our next session.

It's the fourth session of the group and we are sitting around a table working companionably. I mention that we have been invited as a group to be part of Tate Exchange in Liverpool. The response is overwhelmingly positive, and when I ask who would like to take part Jake exclaims, "Stupid question Miss!" Out of curiosity I ask how many A/R/Tographers have been to Tate Liverpool before, and find myself surprised when only Max and Lenny put their hands up. I press further and ask the question who has ever been to any kind of art gallery. Again Max and Lenny put their hands up and Max mentions a family holiday to Barcelona and seeing the Gaudi park. Alice considers for a moment,

then recalls a primary school trip to a museum in Liverpool. The others nod, vaguely recalling memories of school trips in younger years, with Tim mentioning he went to an art gallery on holiday years ago but found it boring. Evan asks if we will be getting time out of school to attend and is joined by a chorus of enthusiastic nods and mutterings of approval from his fellow A/R/Tographers. I am aware that the dates of Tate Exchange coincide with my involvement in exam preparation classes for students, and although I smile and tell them I would have to see, I know from experience that arranging a trip within curriculum time is problematic. Eventually, due to curriculum constraints, the A/R/Tography collective are unable to join the rest of the Tate Exchange participants during the week, and to overcome this obstacle, I arrange to take the A/R/Tographers to Liverpool on Saturday in order that they may have the opportunity to participate in the project.

It is heart-warming to see that the A/R/Tographers are willing to give up their own time over the weekend to participate in the research and as Tate Exchange begins to draw nearer, the excitement builds within the group sessions. As I make preparations with university, I am advised that a small bursary will be available for materials. Knowing how important A/R/Tography had become to the members, I enquire whether funding would be available for each student to get a specially designed A/R/Tography t-shirt. The funding is granted, and when I arrange to collect the same, a member of the University staff has prepared University of Chester canvass bags containing t-shirts, sweets, stationery and a copy of the exhibition catalogue for each individual. Receiving the bags is a significant moment for the A/R/Tographers as it represents the first acknowledgment outside the confines of the group of their existence as a Collective. *I am touched at the time and effort that had gone into providing a gift for each A/R/Tographer.* We wear our t-shirts, proud to identify as A/R/Tographers and be part of Tate Exchange. When the day finally arrives, I arrange to meet the students early on a cold Saturday morning at the local train station.



Figure 23 “Chicago, Board of Trade II” (1999), Andreas Gursky.
This image depicts the trading floor for the Board of Trade in Chicago.
The artist has digitally manipulated the photo to create a composite
image to enhance the sense of movement and chaos of the trading floor.
Due to the fact that the image lacks one single perspective, the
architecture of the room is hard to read. Evan and Tim were fascinated
with the image and were engrossed in the process of looking.

Most A/R/Tographers arrive with their parents, eager to speak to me to confirm times for collection. I notice Tim and Evan arriving at the station alone. Evan looks tired and when questioned says that he has been up since three in the morning doing jobs on the farm and when he gets home that is what he is going to be doing. Tim tells me he is shattered as the previous day he had been working at the dog kennels, cleaning out the cages and, “didn’t get a lot of sleep because my grandad is basically dying.” His factual manner I have come to learn is very typical of Tim, practical and pragmatic. I tell him I am sorry to hear things are difficult. He replies, “It’s okay Miss, he isn’t very nice anyway!” Our train journey into Liverpool is filled with chatter and the mood is optimistic.

During the course of the day the A/R/Tographers are creating art in both the public gallery and in a side room. I observe that when we initially arrive at Tate Exchange, Evan appears to be quite self-conscious and hesitant to work within the public gallery. He wishes to stay in the side room attached to the gallery space and draw. As is common with Evan’s method of working, he does not wish me to interfere with his art making process, but is content to be in my company as he creates. Through experience of working with Evan I have learnt how to intuitively read his method of creating and do not pressure him to join other A/R/Tography members in the public gallery. When his drawing is complete, I take the opportunity to ask if he would like to put it on the wall in the main gallery space. Evan nods and we walk together into the space. I invite Evan to look at the work created by my fellow A/R/Tographers in the space by beginning a dialogue commenting on the images surrounding us. *I can sense that he is gaining confidence and I feel happy that he is beginning to feel comfortable within the space.* Tim saunters over and asks Evan to take a look through a microscope brought in by a fellow doctoral student. I leave them experimenting with placing transparent coloured shapes under the microscope, talking to my colleague.

Initially Jake also appears nervous in the space, reluctant to work in the public gallery. He is happy to stay in the side room engaging my fellow doctoral students in conversation about his passion for photography and the images he takes. Jake's camera hangs permanently around his neck and as I listen he speaks about how good his niece and nephew think his work is and that he is a positive role model for them to look up to. Mikey, Alice and Lenny fully embrace Tate Exchange, taking the opportunity to engage with my fellow doctoral students and their art projects, working within the gallery space free of inhibition and creating their own art to contribute to the visual dialogue around them. At one particular point as Mikey is creating body shapes projected onto a wall he asks, "...Can we do this again Miss?" *It is incredibly rewarding to see the A/R/Tographers working together outside of the school and I feel extremely proud of each and every one of them.*

During a lull in proceedings I invite anyone who may be interested to take a look around the gallery space with me. Tim and Evan take me up on the offer and together we begin to look around the gallery space. Evan tells me that it is his first time in a gallery and it is fascinating observing them negotiate this unfamiliar space. On being faced with a giant Roy Lichtenstein Painting, Tim observes, "its basically a Marvel comic!"



Figure 24 "In the Car" (1963), Roy Lichtenstein

I really enjoyed watching Tim and Evan negotiate the unfamiliar space of the gallery. On being confronted with this Giant Lichtenstein painting, Tim observes, "its basically a Marvel comic!"

I enjoy watching them interact with the art works. I listen to Evan tell Tim that the L.S Lowry painting, Industrial Landscape (1955) was, "...Done in Birmingham. It's where they filmed Peaky Blinders." Evan is talking to Tim and both are really engrossed in the detail of the painting. I observe how Evan has made the connection between the scene painted by Lowry and the setting of the TV series Peaky Blinders to engage and find a way into the painting. I resist the urge to intervene and impose facts on the providence of the painting, aware that this may be perceived as me interfering. Listening to the boys conversation and observing them, prompts me to look at the familiar painting from a fresh perspective. I reflect that in the end, the factual information is of no importance in this instance, Evan has the freedom to interact with the painting subjectively without me imposing knowledge upon him and in turn, he has shown me an alternative viewing system to that of art educator.



Figure 25 “Industrial Landscape”,(1955), L.S Lowry
Listening to Evan talk about the Lowry painting, I hear him state, “Its
where they filmed Peaky Blinders.” Prompting me to look at this familiar
painting from a fresh perspective.



Figure 26 “Film Still - Birmingham in Peaky Blinders” Series 1

When I initially asked the A/R/Tographers who would like to participate in Tate Exchange I was greeted with a positive response from all members. However, only a few had experienced going to an art gallery. In the work *Inheritors and Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1979b; 179a) examine how stimuli during the upbringing of actors shapes their outlooks, beliefs and practices. This idea of regulating oneself out of a system through habitus can be likened to the fact that the A/R/Tographers experiences of art culture were mainly limited to their engagement with the same through a primary school setting (Bourdieu, 2000). The findings of the study suggested that actors from middle class backgrounds are more likely than those from working class backgrounds to attend university. Comparisons can be drawn with the social composition of the A/R/Tography group where each individuals habitus acted as a “structuring structure” (p.166) creating divisions by social class. An example of this is how Mikey and Tim who are both from middle-income families attended art galleries outside of the curriculum on holiday with their families. The fact that the A/R/Tographers had limited experience of an art gallery setting yet were happy to participate, is highly relevant as the data suggested that the A/R/Tography space had become a site of social reconstruction where the A/R/Tographers were active agents in challenging Western hegemonic traditions Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007).

Due to curriculum constraints, it was necessary for me to arrange the visit to Tate Exchange over the weekend. As a teacher I was aware that this was due to my involvement in exam preparation classes for students and from past experience, prior approval for any kind of trip is needed at the commencement of the academic year. This is indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments’ educational policies and the prescriptive nature of delivering the art curriculum with prescribed outcomes (Adams & Owens, 2016). hooks (2003) recognises the importance of conversation both inside and outside of the school environment and Tate Exchange

gave the group an opportunity not only to work outside the confines of the curriculum but outside of the school building. Uitto (2012) and Van Manen and Li (2002) place importance on teachers and students meeting in contexts outside of the school. The project involved us working collaboratively with other external organisations. hooks (2010) argues that teachers need to put themselves out there and take risks with engaged pedagogy consisting of mutual participation. hooks suggests that this increases not only the integrity of the student, but also the teacher. The collaboration which occurred between myself, fellow doctoral students and the A/R/Tographers can be likened to the a/r/tographic process of, "...practice-based research within the arts and education" (Irwin & de Cosson, et al., 2013 p.1999), describing the professional practices of educators, artists and researchers working together to make, create and provide new ways of understanding (Irwin, et al., 2013).

I observed that when Evan arrived at the train station he looked tired and he told me he has been up since three in the morning. Tim also volunteered information about his work schedule and his grandfather's illness. hooks (2003) refers to this as conscious teaching where I had developed a caring relationship negotiating a balance between the personal and professional. The way Tim used humour to defer from the seriousness of his grandfather's illness suggests that constitutive rules of interaction had been disrupted. We used discourse as a vehicle for democracy and created a dialogue in order that Tim could name his fears and voice resistance to speaking out (hooks, 2010 p.22). When we initially arrived at Tate Exchange I noted that both Jake and Tim were nervous and self-conscious. I observed at the commencement of the A/R/Tography sessions, Jake used his camera as a way to form social relationships and also help with feelings of social awkwardness. This aligns with the research of Eisner (1991) and Wilson (2003) who assert that visual methods can be used to transform experiences into their linguistic counterpart. Jake also appeared to use photographic images

to enable him to communicate effectively with Tate Exchange members supporting the theories of Bourriaud (2002), who suggests that art can be used as a vessel to prompt dialogue and discussion through interhuman negotiation (p.41).

When I observed Evan's reluctance to work in the main gallery space of Tate Exchange, I drew on my experience of working with Evan within the A/R/Tography setting to assist him feel more comfortable within this unfamiliar setting. hooks (1994; 2003; 2010) reminds the educator of the importance of knowing when to talk and when to listen when engaging with students. This is pertinent when I worked alongside Evan within the side room of Tate Exchange. I was mindful that Evan would not want me to lead him so I allowed myself to be led by him, intuitively reading body language and verbal responses. hooks (2003) argues that optimal learning cannot and will not occur without acknowledgement of the emotional presence and wholeness of students; where learning is about sharing information listening and hearing individual voices. Therefore I needed to be in tune with the needs of Evan in order to enable him to feel comfortable within the Tate Exchange gallery setting. Miller (2005) suggests that, "The most effective communication occurs when verbal and non-verbal messages are synchronised with student and teacher are working together to form a symbiotic relationship. On examination of the text it would appear that is what occurred in my interactions with Evan.

Evan and Tim chose to walk round the art gallery aligning with the theories of Dewey (1916) who asserts that education be voluntary and learners subject themselves to the learning process. Evan and Tim used their individual habitus to negotiate their way around the unfamiliar territory of the art gallery (Bourdieu, 1990). Tim used his experiences of Marvel comics as a point of reference when faced with the work of Roy Lichtenstein and Evan referred to the television series *Peaky Blinders* when analysing the work of L.S.Lowry. The fact that both boys used references to contemporary media suggests that the gallery space

became a pedagogical visual culture site constructed by young people (Wilson, 2003). Evan and Tim employed their knowledge of contemporary culture making no distinction between the high end culture (art) and low end (mass) culture, as is comparable to the postmodern turn and rise of digital culture (Wilson, 2003 p.108). The data suggests that Evan and Tim used their own system of cultural beliefs, their own 'habitus' as a referent in the unfamiliar gallery space (Bourdieu, 1993). The relationship between habitus and field is pertinent as the field is the gallery space and Evan and Tim employed their subjective experiences of popular culture onto the artwork (Bourdieu, 1990c). hooks (2003) tells us that learning is an interconnected learning process and should not be something which alienates students. Tim and Evan negotiated their encounter with the painting through the lens of contemporary culture. As the facilitator, I chose not to interfere in this process therefore allowing the A/R/Tographers' freedom within the space. Wilson (2003) urges art educators to rethink pre-existing orderly teaching strategies to support the rise of this visual culture. He tells us,

For more than a century, some art educators have tried to keep children's art free from the influence of popular visual culture, and they succeed only through rigid control of what they permit them to draw, paint, and construct. In our postmodern era, is it possible that in art education, as in the art world, the borders between high and low might also disappear? (p.110)

Atkinson (2018) would claim that Evan's refusal to accept the traditional narrative behind the painting ruptured the regulative power of established aesthetic and education criterion. From my perspective by listening to Evan respond to the art, traditional boundaries between student and teacher were disrupted as I am challenged to use a different viewing system. This can be likened to the theories of Atkinson (2018)

who claims that disobedience fractures pedagogical barriers challenging both the individual's way of knowing and the established forms of knowledge (p.194). Once this disobedient pedagogy opened up, a place was created for new possibilities for practice to develop together with new ways of understanding.

Arguably, as a teacher, I lose sight of the fact that students are learning both inside and outside of the classroom and everything that they experience, albeit good or bad, becomes an opportunity to learn. hooks (2003) sees these connections as a kind of democratic education that is not confined to the classroom but something that is taking place continuously and developing organically. It is demonstrated that by entering the gallery setting Evan was able to use the encounter with the L.S Lowry painting as an opportunity to learn. hooks (2003) claims that teachers are respected because they respect freedom. I agree with the above in principle outside of the art curriculum and that by not imposing my teaching persona onto Evan, I respected his right to freedom to learn what he wanted to, when he wanted to, both inside and outside of the making space. I resisted, "the urge to intervene and impose facts on the provenance of the painting" demonstrating I had learnt to suppress my instinct to revert to more traditional roles and not actively construct learning opportunities, to relinquish control and trust events to unfold autonomously.



Figure 27 "Mr Bennett" (2010)

I created this piece of art in response to a project exploring issues of identity and ego. The character created was a masculine hierarchal type character who stands dominant, powerful in his corporate clothing.

Why can't they just leave us alone?

The A/R/Tography Group is initially meant to run for a period of six months. However, it becomes apparent very early on in the project that this is not enough time for the A/R/Tographers and rather than it being about the creation of art, it has become a space for students to meet and create. I initially extend the project to run for another 3 months. It is shortly after this time that I accept a job offer at another school starting in September of the next academic year. Although this presents me with exciting professional opportunities, I feel an obligation to the A/R/Tographers. I decide to investigate ways of sustaining the project after the research has officially finished and I leave. As there are no other members of art staff willing to continue with the group, I begin to explore the possibility of sixth form art students participating. I had attended a staff meeting led by the head of sixth form some months prior, who had requested that subject teachers offer management and leadership roles to students within their chosen areas. The intention of this was to give students the opportunity to gain further experience to enhance their university applications. Theoretically this sounded like a project, which would allow students a certain level of autonomy within the classroom and would lend itself to the research project. I initially make tentative enquiries with my sixth form classes about whether they would like to participate in art-based projects and meet with a positive response.

It is just before spring break and the A/R/Tography Collective are sitting around the central table. I have asked to speak with the group before they commence their making, in order that I may tell them of my new teaching post and to discuss possible ways forward for the Collective. *I feel a sense of guilt, responsibility and obligation towards the A/R/Tographers.* I inform them of my new teaching position and speak to them about the idea of the sixth form leading the A/R/Tography sessions. The students continue to listen but I get the distinct

impression that they already knew about my new post, news travels fast around a school. Lenny is the first to speak, "...So it won't be the same as when you are here but different...like series two of a TV show when the characters change." Jake announces matter of factly that he probably won't be coming, as he will be far too busy with G.C.S.Es. Everyone starts to talk amongst themselves and I wait for a lull in the conversation. In order to steer the dialogue away from my leaving, I suggest that we focus on how the group will continue. I propose a show of hands as to whether the A/R/Tography collective wishes to allow sixth form students to attend their sessions. Hands are raised and after some discussion it is agreed that the sixth form will be invited to attend on a trial basis. The session continues as normal. *I sense an apprehension about letting others into the group but know that they too are aware that without exploring alternatives the group will no longer be able to continue.*

Before I can invite the sixth form to participate in A/R/Tography, the head of department takes me to one side and voices her concerns about allowing the students to lead the group. She expresses her unease that due to the age of the A/R/Tographers who are fourteen to fifteen years old, the sixth form, "may struggle with control." She suggests that the sixth form would be better leading a younger group of students. I counter this argument by pointing out that as a department we do not run any activities for older students which are not directly linked to G.C.S.E coursework improvement and there are no other opportunities at present within the art department for sixth form students to gain experience working with students. I endeavor to assure her that the students are generally well behaved save for occasional youthful exuberance and that rather than pre-empt problems, perhaps the sessions could run on a trial basis. As I discuss this with the head of department, I appreciate that on a professional level she has a valid point about the feasibility of such a project, but am reluctant to express this at present without at least trying to see if there is a viable

alternative. After some negotiation it is agreed that the sixth form students may assist in with A/R/Tography but under my overall supervision. I resolve to persevere with allowing the sixth form access for as long as feasibly possible, however I no longer feel confident this will work out in the long term.

In the next A/R/Tography session I fall into dialogue with Evan. He confides, “I don’t want the sixth form in as it won’t be the same. The good teachers always leave because people want them and the bad teachers stay.” I laugh out loud at his perception of the situation, touched by the fact that Evan has labeled me a “good teacher”. I explain to Evan how because of school rules it isn’t possible to let the A/R/Tography group continue without supervision and Evan becomes visibly frustrated, “Why can’t they leave us alone to get on with what we do!” Privately I can’t help but reflect that the school has a responsibility to facilitate the creation of spaces for students to have freedom to work together outside of the curriculum. Evan and I continue to work together in companionable silence, punctuated with occasional discussions about which colour to choose next, or whether I would mind cutting out the next template for his art creation

Throughout the research I observed that as the sessions progress, the authority shifted away from me towards the learning environment (Adams and Owens, 2016; Dewey, 1938). However, this was challenged and once again rendered ambiguous when the research project was drawing to a conclusion and I began to explore opportunities for the group to continue. When I called a meeting to discuss the groups future, I assumed a hierarchal role as is the nature of the student teacher relationship (Adams & Owens, 2016; Ranciere, 1991). It was necessary for me to assume this position in order to help the students decide on the future of the A/R/Tography Collective. Therefore demonstrating that I could not step away from the student teacher relationship and had to learn to negotiate professional and personal boundaries (Uitto, 2012).

I acknowledged that I was surprised to feel a sense of guilt, responsibility and obligation towards the A/R/Tographers. When I informed them of my new position my sense of responsibility and obligation was tied up within my professional role, the awareness of guilt was felt on both a personal and professional level. Uitto (2012) questions whether it is possible to place boundaries between the professional and the personal and the data exemplifies this through the relationship I developed with the A/R/Tographers.

When the A/R/Tographers debated the future of the group, I steer the conversation in a positive direction to discuss the continuation of A/R/Tography, interjecting and directing the discussion to include all members. Jeffs and Smith (2005) place the educator central within a group setting and I took overall control of the group. Although selfgoverning within the A/R/Tography space, the new job position was an external factor that could not be managed within the confines of the group. As the artist teacher in the room, it fell to me to use my professional judgment on how to direct and steer conversations. Jeffs and Smith (2005) recognise this and make the point that as educators we need to negotiate this field of learning. Although the incident was democratic in that it was put to a vote by a show of hands, the reality presented to the A/R/Tographers was that if the group was to continue there simply was no other option. In effect the group is going through the motions of democracy. This is indicative of the underlying power structures and regulatory frameworks at play within the classroom environment (Adams, 2010).

The data revealed how as an educator I endeavoured to keep the group running by exploring the possibility of involving sixth form students. When the head of the art department voiced concern that they, "...may struggle with control." I was quick to counter the argument although I privately acknowledged her concerns. The Culture of OFSTED (2011) with its rigid criteria of what makes a school outstanding demands

conformity, not just for educators but also the pupils working within the system. It is arguable that a self-regulating group such as A/R/Tography would be perceived to be a risk for someone working within the curriculum framework. Pupil progress, assessment and measurable attainment are key factors no longer in individual lessons but across the school. The school is demanding because the system itself is demanding. To allow freedom and democracy within curriculum time is a risk the head of department simply could not afford to take as her professional identity and integrity came under scrutiny by the school organisation. This is indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments' educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016). Inner tensions were revealed between my own desire for freedom of expression and my pedagogical identity, which was required to adhere to the culture of the school.

This highlights the problematic nature of introducing new methods of learning and working within the school environment. What Adams (2010) refers to as the, "...underlying social structures that act as constraining mechanisms. These regulatory frameworks appear to prevent 'anomalous' learning events that threaten to upset the relations of power that sanctioned authority structures ordinarily preserve" (p.684). It was telling that the A/R/Tography group was only allowed to continue on the proviso that I as the adult had overall supervision of the group, suggesting that within the regulatory system of the school there were tensions in relation to the power of authority. Dewey (1938) argues the role of the teacher is not to impose authority as students have sufficient understanding of the rules to know they are for the good of the whole group and not for personal power. This was possible within the confines of A/R/Tography where I was applying these values. However, the research project was the exception rather than the rule. Dewey (1938) and Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) speak about the need to fight for democratic values and this fight for freedom is evidenced through my conversation with the head of department and

how I searched for possibilities to keep the group running. I endeavoured to apply my knowledge of school curricula focus to facilitate the continuation of the group, thus subverting the neo liberalistic agenda to suit the continuation of the A/R/Tography Collective, disobeying and fracturing the “parameters of instruction and pedagogic work” (Atkinson, 2018 p.157). This demonstrates I am acting in the role of advocate and facilitator for the group but also as a disobedient force against the culture of the school (Atkinson, 2018).

Van Manen and Li (2002) talk about the personal involvement teachers can have in students’ lives without necessarily recognising the same. This was in evidence when Evan told me that, “The good teachers always leave.” He became visibly frustrated when discussing the continuation of A/R/Tography exclaiming, “Why can’t they leave us alone to get on with what we do!” Through analysis of the data I would assert that, *they* are the mechanisms of power within the school. Jeffs and Smith (2005) argue that democracy in education is a belief that everyone should be treated as autonomous agents who take part in the governance of their own society not objects of legislation to be passively ruled over. Through voicing his opinion, Evan demonstrates his frustration at the inability of the group to be self-governing without intervention from authority.

In turn my emotional response demonstrated how the balance between personal and professional boundaries was challenged (Uitto, 2012). The fact I was aware of my professional obligations and did not share my private thoughts about the matter, demonstrated how I negotiated these boundaries to maintain a professional distance.

Chapter Five A Search for Understanding

In the preceding two chapters I explore the A/R/Tographers individual and collective experiences of attending the A/R/Tography group through the use of reflective vignettes. Each vignette is followed by critical reflections on the arising phenomena interwoven with supporting literature (Al Sadi & Basit, 2017). In this chapter I intend to synthesize the data arising out of each vignette and establish the findings through emergent themes. This doctoral research project investigates making and relational creativity with particular emphasis given to the impact on relationships between teacher and student and fellow students. The themes arising from the findings are Democracy and Freedom, Spaces of Resistance and Change, The Art of Communication and Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching.

Democracy and Freedom

This thesis arose through the dissatisfaction I felt with my own teaching practice. Reflecting on my pedagogy, I felt that I had become the antithesis of what an artist teacher should be, a dictator rather than a facilitator. There was a clear tension within my practice between freedom of expression and adhering to the target driven culture of the school. Democracy and Freedom were central to this a/r/tographic thesis and it was established through the findings that freedom was not something which could be taken as a given, even within the democratic framework of the research project. Although as an educator I was fighting for democracy and freedom in principle, due to my cultural conditioning (Bourdieu, 2010), I could at times subconsciously inhibit the democratic process. The challenge within the research lay not in establishing democratic principles but individually and collectively reasserting the same continually aligning with the theories of Dewey (1966; 1938).

Spaces of Resistance and Change

One of the key issues arising out of the data was that the A/R/Tographers like myself expressed dissatisfaction working within the confines of the curriculum and needed a place to, “chill and make art”. It was not enough to establish a democratic learning framework, each individual had to fight for democratic values and freedom Dewey and Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007). The site evolved into a space of change and resistance as the A/R/Tographers and I asserted our desire to disobey the tightly led curricula of the school. The need to create a site of resistance and change aligns with the theories of Wilson (2003) and Atkinson (2018) and a space was created between school and self-initiated art.

The Art of Communication

The need to prioritise the voices of the A/R/Tographers was placed at the heart of this thesis, as was actively listening to the voices of the A/R/Tographers (hooks, 2010). By exploring verbal and non-verbal language through a/r/tographic practices, autonomy was established and relationships strengthened through the arising narratives (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). It was found that communication was not the sole domain of the explicator (Ranciere, 2010b), but formed part of a reciprocal relationship central to the foundations of democratic educational research. The creative acts formed symbiotic relationships with the arising narratives, allowing me to employ a range of pedagogical practices to enhance each individual's learning experience.

Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching

The subject of this thesis was prompted by my own crisis of identity as both an artist and an educator. As discussed in the Art of Communication, individuality needs to be acknowledged, respected and facilitated within an art educational setting. In order to deliver a

personalised pedagogical approach for each individual, I needed not only to come to terms with my crisis of identity as an educator and artist but also to reveal my *self* to the A/R/Tographers. By negotiating the boundaries between my personal and professional “self” (Uitto, 2012), I revealed my authenticity (Jeffs & Smith, 2005), which in turn facilitated and allowed the A/R/Tographers to reveal their *selves* to me. By acknowledging each individual’s identity, I was able to tailor my pedagogy to meet the needs of each person knowing when to talk and when to listen (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010).

I shall now seek to establish the findings of the research providing context and supporting literature for each arising theme. Due to the holistic nature of the research design the findings are inextricably linked and this is acknowledged and addressed within the body of the text.

Democracy and Freedom

The concepts of democracy and freedom are an integral element of this study. The findings established that these fundamental rights cannot be assumed to exist within arts education, especially in light of the current political climate where neoliberal economics have resulted in education being viewed as performative and individualistic (Adams, 2018). Hierarchical relationships between the A/R/Tographers and me were challenged and re-negotiated throughout the research project. As Dewey (1938) proposes, democracy was not absolute within the educational environment and was something that needed to be constantly negotiated and re-asserted. This study suggests that the need to fight for democracy was an issue for both the A/R/Tographers and me. From the A/R/Tographers perspective, there was a power imbalance due to the hierarchical nature of the student/teacher relationship (Ranciere, 2010b). This was exemplified when Jake and Evan exercised their democratic right not to participate in activities, I as

the educator proposed. Early on in the research project I tried to engage Jake in a game of Exquisite Corpse and felt a compulsion to encourage him to draw. Jake informed me in no uncertain terms he did not wish to participate despite my persistence and enthusiasm. Evan also exercised his right not to have knowledge imparted to him without permission when I interrupted his creative process by showing him a piece of work by the artist Yves Klein. Evan's response of, "Oohhh feels like a lesson." highlighted to me unequivocally that he has no desire for me to act as explicator imparting my knowledge onto him (Ranciere, 1991). As suggested by Jeffs and Smith, (2005), due to the democratic nature of the space, the A/R/Tographers felt at ease challenging me rather than passively accepting information I was imparting to them. I in turn had to contain, "... the impulse to always be the provider" (Jeffs & Smith, 2005 p.55).

At the commencement of the project, I wished to challenge the traditional expectations of what a teacher could be within the classroom environment, voluntarily wishing to be perceived as something other (Uitto, 2012). An example of this was when I invited the students to call me *Lindsey* and made a point of changing out of my work clothes to metaphorically leave my teaching persona behind. However this action in itself was an example of my subconscious desire to exert control on the group by inadvertently taking control of language to shape it into my own perception of how I should be addressed (Cazden, 2001 p.15). This was exemplified when I invited the A/R/Tographers to call me by my first name. However it became apparent they did not feel comfortable doing so and revert back to calling me *Miss*. I learn that actions on behalf of the educator alone are not enough to instigate change. The democratic learning framework created by A/R/Tography would take time to establish and must be voluntary aligning with the theories of Dewey (1938). This is exemplified when I acquire the nickname *Bennett* from Jake and he began to use playful, open body language to engage me. This example of disruption between the

traditional boundaries between student and teacher would take time to inaugurate into the values of the group and was founded on me being perceived by the A/R/Tographers as my authentic self (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

According to the data at the commencement of the project, I subconsciously inhabited the role of keeper of knowledge and as the research project progressed, became more self-aware and learnt when to relinquish control supressing the desire to impart knowledge (Ranciere, 2010b). This is exemplified when at the commencement of the first session, the A/R/Tographers are on their phones and the noise levels were rising. I expressed discomfort at the lack of discipline within the environment and assumed control of the class by exerting my authority through my voice and presence within the setting. I imposed my authority for fear of chaos and not trusting students to have sufficient understanding of the rules (Dewey, 1938). This came into conflict with my role as art educator in the traditional confines of the classroom, where I was familiar with controlling the actions of the students (Ranciere, 2010b). It was therefore possible that I was inadvertently adhering to curriculum and cultural expectations in a space that was designed to be neutral ground. Therefore taking the curriculum out of the classroom but not my teacher self. This corresponds with the research of Bourdieu (2010) and the concept of habitus as I related the phenomena of the classroom to the perceived structural code of my educational experience. These preconceptions were once again in evidence when Evan and Tim initially arrived at A/R/Tography. I had a pre-conception that due to their presumed lack of enthusiasm in lesson time, they did not care for the subject. This was built on my pre-existing knowledge and assumptions (Bourdieu, 2010).

As the study progressed, my relationship with the A/R/Tographers began to morph between educator and facilitator as I allowed myself to be directed by the needs of the group, aligning with the research of

Vecchi (2010) and Jeffs and Smith (2005). This is exemplified when I chair the A/R/Tography meeting to explore ways that the group could continue, something that the A/R/Tographers wanted to happen. I negotiated the meeting by knowing when to talk and when to listen (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). This will be addressed further under the theme Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching. Therefore this study suggests that I could not step away from the teacher student relationship and had to learn to negotiate professional and personal boundaries over the duration of the research project (Uitto, 2012). During the chairing of the meeting it fell to me to use my professional judgment on how to direct and steer conversations. Jeffs and Smith (2005) recognise this and make the point that as educators we need to negotiate this field of learning.

This study suggests that as the A/R/Tography sessions progressed, the group became self-regulating and had become a space without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Jeffs & Smith 2015). This was exemplified when Jake became upset and left A/R/Tography. I did not need to intervene in my capacity as a teacher, as Evan assumed the role of peacemaker and dealt with the situation. Similarities can be found with the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005) who would refer to the group as, “Culturally Specific” (p.30). This also links to the notion of social citizenship proposed by Adam and Owens (2016) evidenced by how Evan and Jake worked together to resolve the issue. Self-regulation in the group was very much in evidence in response to Alice’s narrative on the loss of her granddad. The A/R/Tographers displayed a responsibility towards each other’s wellbeing, demonstrated through the care and concern in Lenny’s hug and the shared stories of similar experiences by Tim and Jake. This is evidence of a kind of social citizenship when creativity and democracy align as proposed by Adam and Owens (2016 p.20). Jeffs and Smith (2015) go further to suggest that democracy is a belief that everyone should be treated as autonomous agents who take part in the governance of their own society, not objects of legislation to

be passively ruled over and the incident demonstrates that individuals had agency within the group.

Problematic topics such as family relationships and bereavement were discussed in an open forum where the A/R/Tographers listened to each other volunteering their own lived experiences, finding commonalities and providing supportive relationships. This study suggests that a, “cooperative of learning” had been formed (hooks, 2003, p.22). This is particularly pertinent when during an A/R/Tography session, Jake disclosed to the group his problematic relationship with his father. Evan, Alice and Lenny all contributed to the arising narrative, talking about their own relationships with their fathers and providing a sympathetic, understanding perspective for Jake. Similarities can be found with the theories of Souness and Fairley (2005) and the pedagogy of Room 13. Souness and Fairley discuss how Room 13 provides a space where social issues affecting students can be dealt with within the group and argue that adults are more uncomfortable being presented with these outcomes than students are at articulating them. In the A/R/Tography space the findings suggest that issues affecting the lives of everyone, were dealt with. Parallels can be found here with my own pedagogy and how within A/R/Tography the dialogue had a place to be heard, something that would not occur within the confines of a lesson. Through this process commonalities were found and this in turn strengthened relationships within the group. The findings suggest that I was enacting an engaged pedagogy within the space where boundaries had been blurred within A/R/Tography to form a “radical space of possibility” (hooks, 2010, p.22). This research demonstrates that A/R/Tographers’ provided a support network for each other, demonstrated through their interactions with each other within the space. This aligns with the research of Jeffs and Smith (2005) who make the link between democracy and open dialogue and assert that democratic spaces can be used to promote conversation and contribution.

Spaces of Resistance and Change

To counteract the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments' educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016), this study suggests that it was important not only to assert the fundamental rights of democracy and freedom within informal making spaces, but also to challenge current pedagogical constraints to create disruptions, allowing new spaces of learning and possibilities to open up. It was possible that both the A/R/Tographers and I shared the commonality of developing disobedient tendencies within the A/R/Tography space to fracture the, "parameters of instruction and pedagogic work" (Atkinson, 2018 p.147). From my perspective, I was disobeying the confines of curriculum constraints and voluntarily entering the A/R/Tography space to fracture and challenge established forms of knowledge (Atkinson, 2018 p.194). Once these disobedient pedagogies opened up, the A/R/Tography Collective became a place where new possibilities for practice and understanding were developed. This is exemplified when I chose to reveal the artwork *ICD-10* and shared the story of my father's chronic alcoholism with the group. This is a pivotal moment in the study, as I broached a subject which could be perceived as risky within the school environment (Adams, 2010; hooks 1994). I also exchanged in dialogue about bereavement with Mikey, allowing me to work in the role of facilitator adapting to Mikey's individual needs demonstrating teaching with love defined by hooks (2003) as showing, "...Care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust" (p.131). As discussed previously, emotional connections with students can be viewed as suspect within a teaching environment (hooks, 2003) and I took a risk by employing this method within my own pedagogy. This corresponds with the theories of Atkinson (2018) in that I disobeyed and fractured the, "parameters of instruction and pedagogic work" (p.157). This demonstrates I acted in the role of advocate and facilitator for the group, a disobedient force against the culture of the school (Atkinson, 2018).

The idea of disobedience through freedom of expression was able to flourish within the A/R/Tography space and acted as a vehicle for A/R/Tographers to have the freedom to break out of familiar roles and explore their identities (Atkinson, 2018). Boundaries of what was deemed acceptable and unacceptable art were revealed and disrupted (Wilson, 2003). This was exemplified through Evan creating textile crafts, arguably going against the traditional role of farmer, and Tim pursuing art, which he evidently enjoyed in contravention to the opinions of the teacher who declared Tim was not a “very good artist” and his mother who advised that he could not take the subject as an option. Evan’s felt bag and Tim’s *Machine that goes Bang!* stood as disobedient artefacts against conformity and the demands of the curriculum (Atkinson, 2018). Evan chose to create a textile bag with an applique of a tractor standing as a disobedient force against his cultural habitus (Bourdieu, 1993). For Tim the *Machine that goes Bang!* represented his desire to make and create art without asking for permission and free from curriculum constraints. Mikey’s alter-ego Colin the Anarchist was created multiple times within the setting and was allowed to swear. Traditional boundaries were deconstructed and comparisons can be drawn here with Atkinson’s theory of Disobedience (2017). By engaging in the disobedient act of creating a character who swore, Mikey was retaliating against his lack of freedom within curriculum time, creating what Bourriaud (2002) refers to as a disruption, which can, “...record tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life” (p.17).

All students who participated in the study were self-selecting with a collective desire to create art outside of the curriculum. This is comparable to the pedagogy of Room 13 and Reggio Emilia Models of learning where the classrooms acted as an informal making space. This would suggest that A/R/Tography facilitated and allowed diversity and the A/R/Tographers had given themselves permission to pursue their own interests. Wilson (2003) refers to this as an educational site of

pedagogical visual culture where students have agency over what they create and how they will create it. Therefore it seems that the A/R/Tographers wanted a space to meet like-minded people to make and create within a social setting. This was evidenced through my conversations with Lenny and Evan who told me respectively, “I like the group because it is fun and social and you don’t get told what to do.” “I draw all the time and wanted to meet like-minded people and have the freedom to do what I wanted. In school there are groups like the populars and the clowns, well I am always known as the artist.”

This study suggests that through the process of self-selection, the A/R/Tographers had chosen to marginalise themselves and create their own space. The A/R/Tographers who took part in the research project were self-selecting, creating a “Culturally Specific” group in which to work alongside each other, talk and listen (Jeffs & Smith, p.30). This aligns with the theories of Bickel (2006) who asserts that a/r/tographic practices occur in the liminal in-between space. hooks (2003) discusses the possibility of a learning community in an environment where difference and intimacy form a symbiotic relationship and this is what occurred within the A/R/Tography group. This was highlighted when problematic topics such as family relationships and bereavement were discussed in an open forum with A/R/Tographers not only listening to each other, but also volunteering their own lived experiences, finding commonalities and providing supportive relationships.

There is evidence to suggest that risks could be taken both socially and with artwork, something that could not be allowed to happen within curriculum time. This is particularly pertinent to the art generated by Lenny, who created Keiko, and characters enabling him to cope with his anxieties and fears such as Antidote. The characters not only assisted Lenny with internal dialogue, but were also revealed to others within the group through their social context, which is indicative of relational art, creating discussion and dialogue (Bourriaud, 2002). Alice also created

autobiographical art commemorating her late grandfather's love of Northern Soul music, aligning with the theories of Bourriaud (2002), who suggests that a successful piece of art will open dialogue and discussion in the form of inter-human negotiation (p.41). Parallels can be drawn with the a/r/tographic concept of "theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/research, teaching/learning, and art/making" (Irwin & De Cosson 2004 p.28). This research demonstrates that by allowing a space for the self-generated art of students to be revealed (Wilson, 2003), the work became a vehicle for dialogue and the visual articulation of selfexpression (Vecchi, 2010). Through the A/R/Tographers choosing to work in the liminal in-between of the A/R/Tography space (Bickell, 2006), their marginalisation by choice was used as a tool of empowerment for the individuals concerned (Dash, 2007). The A/R/Tographers created an informal making space to reveal their own self-generated art to each other, supporting the philosophies of Wilson (2003) and Bourriaud (2002), whose theories on relational art talk of artistic practice in relation to its human and social context. The findings suggest that the artwork created through the research project was very much for sharing within the group setting and invariably had an accompanying narrative prompting dialogue from both the creator and fellow A/R/Tographers.

The Art of Communication

Communication is at the heart of this study and the findings suggest that without fostering and nurturing communication in its various forms, educators are not fully responding to the needs of their students and are still consciously and subconsciously imparting their own agenda as keepers of knowledge and explicators (Ranciere, 2010b).

According to this study, I can infer that the relationships fostered within A/R/Tography enabled each person's social world to be revealed. Correspondingly, the theories of Wilson (2003) calls for a pedagogical culture site constructed by youth to be created in response to the rise

of digital culture. This was exemplified by Jake and Evan who shared their musical tastes and Max and Lenny revealing their enjoyment of watching You Tube clips, such as, *Odd 1s Out* and funny skits (Wilson, 2003). Relationships were fostered through the process of making and talking as is common in relational art practices (Bourriaud, 2002) and this will be discussed further under the sub-heading Articulating Physical Narratives. Layers of dialogue were formed between A/R/Tographer and facilitator as stories were shared on topics such as loss, family and bereavement. There is evidence of how I entered this inter-textual dialogue by discussing the artwork *ICD-10* and how it was created in response to my father's alcoholism (Wilson, 2003 p.11). This also demonstrates that alongside arising inter-textual dialogue, the process of visually articulating ideas through making was revealed (Bourriaud, 2002). By creating a space free from curriculum constraints, A/R/Tographers' confidence and willingness to exchange in dialogue between themselves and myself as facilitator was encouraged.

The data suggests commonalities between myself and A/R/Tographers were revealed through unfolding dialogue and art (Jeffs & Smith, 2005; hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). An example of this was in the arising narratives with Mikey when helping him to make his felt Colin.

Commonalities were found, such as that we were both left-handed and how we both had supportive relationships with our grandmothers. This implies that connections such as these allowed A/R/Tographers to see me as authentic, but also enabled me to be more empathetic, aligning with the theories of Jeffs and Smith (2005). A side of my persona was revealed which may not necessarily be seen within a traditional lesson. The findings suggest that positive relationships between students and teachers are reinforced and strengthened when making and talking. Both myself and the A/R/Tographers revealed experiences and ideas through the sensory process of making, transforming experience into its linguistic counterpart, dialogue - what Eisner refers to as synaesthesia (1991).

As the sessions progress, I observed the A/R/Tographers grow in confidence in their interactions with each other and how they revealed their social world which may not have been revealed within a traditional classroom setting. This aligns with the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) who argue that the field of contemporary art has opened up spaces of social engagement and the whole field of the artist is characterised by diversity. In my experience, within the normal class environment, students would be inhibited to reveal too much information about themselves for fear of being mocked and isolated by their peers. This simply did not happen within A/R/Tography and diversity was acknowledged and celebrated within the group. Similarly the theories of Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007), suggest that art education can become a site of social reconstruction where sociocultural diversity is both recognised and celebrated. Examples of this acceptance of difference within the space was particularly in evidence by the way Lenny chose to explore his identity as both Keiko and Ashley, and also with Jake who had fractious relationships within the school environment due to his perceived idiosyncrasies.

A/R/Tography afforded me the space to become a better listener and develop a greater understanding of individual A/R/Tographers through nurturing relationships (Miller, 2005; hooks, 2010). This is demonstrated by how prior to the study, I found Mikey demanding within curriculum time. In line with the theories of hooks, (2003) I began to actively listen and communicate through a lens of, "...Care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust" (p. 131). Therefore Mikey's needs had not changed in respect of his desire for attention, but the background knowledge I had acquired resulted in me becoming more patient, as I understood the underlying issues behind the same. According to this data, we can infer that taking the time to listen and respond to individual students' needs had a positive impact on relationships. It is therefore likely that by actively listening and talking to A/R/Tographers, I was able to identify barriers to learning and work with individuals to remove the same, aligning with the

research of Vecchi (2010). This was exemplified when working with Tim and Evan whom I incorrectly assumed had little interest in art through my observations in curriculum time. However, through the relationships and understanding built up through making and talking, I was able to identify this perceived lack of interest was in fact a lack of confidence. Therefore I was able to use this knowledge within the realms of my relationships with students inside the curriculum. This study demonstrates that once traditional hierarchal boundaries between student and teacher are challenged, making spaces of discourse open up enabling students to discuss issues which affect their everyday lives and enrich experiences of learning (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

This is particularly pertinent when I worked alongside Evan within the side room of Tate Exchange. I was mindful that Evan was lacking in confidence to join other members of A/R/Tography in the main gallery. Therefore I needed to be in tune with the needs of Evan in order to enable him to feel comfortable within the Tate Exchange gallery setting. This aligns with the theories of Miller, (2005) in relation to body language who suggests that, the most effective communication occurs when both verbal and non verbal messages are synchronised between student and teacher. Therefore enabling them to work together to form a symbiotic relationship. On examination of the data it would appear that this was occurring in my interactions with Evan. I attempted to read Evan's verbal and non-verbal cues to create a supportive learning environment in order that he may feel comfortable within this unfamiliar space. hooks (2010) highlights the importance of sharing stories so the onus is not always on the student to confess. By making my personal identity visible and taking a risk, mutual participation between the A/R/Tographers and I was facilitated through engaged pedagogy (hooks, 2010). This was in evidence when I chose to reveal the artwork *ICD-10* created in response to my father's alcoholism. I revealed the subject of the artwork, choosing to reveal the accompanying narrative of disempowerment and frustration I felt at

witnessing his decline. This study suggests I was an A/R/Tographer working alongside fellow A/R/Tographers in a space where symbiotic relationships were occurring between art, narrative and theory. What Irwin (2004) refers to as a knowing that, "...integrates knowing, doing and making" (p.17).

Articulating Physical Narratives

It is possible to hypothesise that the conditions of the making space enabled A/R/Tographers to become both individually and collectively empowered through the process of making and unfolding dialogue (Bourriaud, 2002). The A/R/Tographers expressed a desire to collectively transgress the boundaries of traditional art education through creative acts. This is evidenced through each A/R/Tographer having the freedom to create whatever they wished to within the space, aligning with the theories of Bourriaud (2002) and his theories on relational art. This was exemplified by the artwork being generated from a wide range of topics such as Alice's autobiographical themed art through to Tim and his creation of sculptural machines fresh from his imagination. Each A/R/Tographer created artwork based on their subjective experiences responding to their social context (Bourriaud, 2002 p.113). In turn the artwork became a vessel with accompanying dialogue opening up narrative and discussion in the form of interhuman negotiation (Bourriaud, 2002 p.41). This observation may support the hypothesis that the relationship between the A/R/Tographers and their individual and collective making, amounted to challenges for new possibilities of practice to develop, together with new ways of understanding. This corresponds with the a/r/tographic concept of "theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/research, teaching/learning, and art/making" (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004 p.28). This was exemplified when I observed the ease and boldness with which Tim and Evan engaged with materials free from curriculum constraints and inhibitions. The emergent self-led practices allowed the A/R/Tographers to take creative

risks, which would not be possible within curriculum time. Within the space a/r/tographic practices enabled boundaries to be blurred between perceptions of the quality of outcomes and the focus was on the process of making and the accompanying narrative (Irwin, 2004).

Cultural Identity and Holistic Teaching

The subject of this thesis was prompted by my own crisis of identity as both an artist and an educator. This theme is important as this study revealed that my personal identity was inextricably linked to my pedagogical identity. One could not be separated from the other just like learner identities could not be separate to their identities outside of the learning environment. This study suggests that there was a tension within me as an educator concerning the lack of freedom within the curriculum. Initially this was due to my perception of the role. However the findings suggest it was the constraining regulatory systems of power within the school that caused this identity crisis aligning with the theories of Adams (2010). This was demonstrated by my desire to change clothes and be seen as an artist rather than an educator at the commencement of A/R/Tography. As suggested by Uitto (2012), traditional expectations are that teacher's personal identity is hidden. My choice to change clothing is symbolic of Atkinson's (2018) theory of disobedience against curriculum constraints, acting to rupture the boundaries between pedagogue and participant. This would suggest that I was resisting the traditional teacher identity and voluntarily wanted to be revealed as something *other*.

At the commencement of the project I wanted to be perceived as an artist rather than an educator. However, as the sessions progressed, I reflected on my role and concluded, "...my role within the group is that of facilitator...my individual creativity does not have to be expressed through the creation of my own physical artifacts, but...through my

engagement with A/R/Tographers.” The data would suggest that my creative role was assisting others to visually articulate and realise individual and collective needs and requirements. This observation may support the hypothesis that I synthesised the role of creating by proxy. This aligns with the role of *atelier* as can be found in Reggio Emilia models of learning explored by Vecchi (2010) who talks about developing and supporting visual language through supportive relationships. This research suggests that through A/R/Tography, I was able to reconcile my identity outside of school with that of my pedagogical self and perceive this as a holistic role with each element being of equal importance to the other.

A pivotal moment in the study is when I chose to reveal the artwork *ICD10* to the A/R/Tographers and revealed the problematic relationship with my father. This would suggest I brought my own system of cultural beliefs, my own *habitus* with me to the social situation, which was the culture of the school (Bourdieu, 1993). This study would suggest I used my pre-existing dispositions to negotiate the relationship between *habitus* and *field* (Bourdieu, 1990c). The *field* being the A/R/Tography group and my own subjective, formative experiences, that being the problematic relationship with my estranged father. Through revealing my own art and the accompanying narrative, I revealed my *self*, allowing the A/R/Tographers to see me as an individual. hooks (2010) suggests that students want to see their teachers as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences and by revealing my identity, I opened dialogue for the A/R/Tographers to share their lived experiences with me. This study suggests that A/R/Tography afforded me the opportunity to be seen as a person, whilst I negotiated complex professional boundaries (Uitto, 2012). Therefore my personal identity formed an element of my role as facilitator within the space. Within this study I chose to negotiate the sociological constraints of my *habitus* to reflect on why the A/R/Tographers within the space are, “...thinking and acting the way they do and how these actions impact on social

reproduction and change” (Grenfell, 2003 p.58). Therefore I used my habitus as a sociological gaze in which to empower both the A/R/Tographers and myself. This research suggests that by considering the A/R/Tographers’ collective and individual needs through this lens, I was able to holistically incorporate these elements within my pedagogical identity.

This study would suggest that during the research project there was a re-assertion and re-formation of identities occurring within the space. This was pertinent to the creation of Mikey’s alter-ego Colin who is the antithesis of his creator. A/R/Tography provided a safe space for members to assert their individuality and articulate issues that affected their lives (Souness & Fairley, 2005). This study suggests that within A/R/Tography, diversity was celebrated and facilitated as normal societal roles were challenged (Dash 2006; 2010; Adams & Owens, 2016; Atkinson, 2018; Bourriaud, 2002). This is evidenced through Lenny’s exploration of identity within the space to enable him to express and represent the life he leads. This aligns with the theories of Dash (as cited in Addison & Burgess, 2007) who argues that when students become active agents in challenging and disrupting societal norms, sociocultural diversity can be acknowledged and appreciated. hooks (2003) talks about the concept of a learning community situated in an environment where difference and intimacy form a symbiotic relationship. Lenny introduced me to Keiko his furry identity in the second A/R/Tography session and explored this through the creation and dissemination of both digital and physical drawings within the A/R/Tography space. It would appear that Lenny used the arts to decode values and concepts associated with his identity (Eisner, 1991 and Wilson, 2003). Lenny also began to wear gender-neutral uniform and asked to be referred to as Ashley. There appears to be a hybrid mix of gender and cultural identity being explored by Lenny within the space, aligning with the theories of Dash (2010) who calls for pedagogues to recognise the existence of diasporic influences. Arguably

the diasporic influences relate not only to the mixed heritage culture into which Lenny has been born, but the socio-diverse online culture of the furry community. Similarly, the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) argue that, “contemporary art has opened up spaces of social engagement characterised by diversity, in part as a manifestation of social media and globalisation” (p.12).

This study suggests that it is possible to hypothesise that the conditions of the making space enabled A/R/Tographers to become both individually and collectively empowered through the process of making and the unfolding dialogue (Bourriaud, 2002). During the course of the research project the A/R/Tographers formed self-directed, collaborative working relationships within the space, particularly exemplified through the spontaneous collaborations between Evan and Tim when working on their cardboard sculptures. When negotiating the art gallery space at Tate Exchange, both Tim and Evan used their own cultural field, their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2010), to negotiate unfamiliar territory, demonstrated in the way they engaged and talked to each other about the work of Lichtenstein and Lowry within the gallery setting. Tim used his experiences of Marvel comics as a point of reference when faced with the work of Roy Lichtenstein and Evan referred to the television series *Peaky Blinders* when analysing the work of L.S.Lowry. The fact that both boys used contemporary media as their point of reference, suggests that the gallery space became a pedagogical visual culture site constructed by young people (Wilson, 2003). Evan and Tim employed their knowledge of contemporary culture, making no distinction between the high end culture (art) and low end culture (mass) as is comparable to the post-modern turn and rise of digital culture (Wilson, 2003 p.108).

The data suggests that Evan and Tim used their own system of cultural beliefs, their own *habitus* as a referent in the unfamiliar gallery space (Bourdieu, 1993). The relationship between *habitus* and field is pertinent as the field is the gallery space and Evan and Tim employed

their subjective experiences of popular culture onto the artwork (Bourdieu, 1990c). hooks (2003) asserts that learning is an interconnected process with outside influences and should not be something which alienates students. Tim and Evan negotiated their encounter with the artwork through the lens of contemporary culture. This study suggests that by discussing the artwork and making cultural references to their own lived experiences, Evan and Tim worked in collaboration, giving themselves agency and power within this unfamiliar setting. This aligns with the theories of Adams and Owens (2016) who argue that within democratic learning spaces, authority resides in the learning environment, not with any given person in authority.

This study demonstrates that reciprocal relationships were developed and strengthened through talking about lived experiences (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). An example of this is when Alice spoke about the loss of her granddad. As she related her story to the group Alice commented, “I never thought that I would be talking about my granddad and

Northern Soul in school. I have never spoken about this before.” Everyone listened sympathetically and contributed, with personal experiences of loss. These reciprocal supportive relationships facilitated individual background knowledge being revealed enabling me to tailor my teaching to individual needs. The data reveals that there is a reciprocal relationship between the art created and the narratives that arise through the process of making. This is evidenced through the creation of characters such as Keiko, Colin, and also Jake who uses his images as a springboard into conversations (Bourdieu, 2010).

Holistic Teaching

This research project was designed to consider how the disparity between curriculum and personal art could be bridged, through the

conception of a making space for emergent creative practices to develop and evolve. At the commencement of the project, I was eager to allow my artist identity to be revealed to the A/R/Tographers. I had a preconception that I would be creating art alongside them and acknowledged I felt a sense of frustration when, after two sessions, I had not had the chance to share my art practice. The findings suggest that this frustration was not prompted by the need to share my work, but the desire to reveal the potentiality of the subject to the A/R/Tographers for freedom of expression (Adams & Owens, 2016; Dewey, 1938). This desire to reveal the possibilities of the subject is again symptomatic of my own pre-conditioned habitus (Bourdieu, 2010), as my art practice explores the problematic relationship with my estranged father. This is not something that could be forced onto the A/R/Tographers and I initially struggled to relinquish control of the A/R/Tography Collective (Ranciere, 2010b). As the sessions progressed, I became comfortable inhabiting the role of facilitator, responding to the needs of individuals. This was initially prompted through actively listening to the A/R/Tographers discuss problematic relationships with their fathers, allowing me access to their inner worlds and concerns. As suggested by hooks (2003), I learnt to acknowledge the emotional presence and wholeness of students through listening. This was demonstrated when observing Evan drawing and his lack of confidence. As the art facilitator, this knowledge enabled me to see his worldview, enabling me to modify my teaching to encourage and engage him. In return, my artist persona was satisfied by promoting confidence in his abilities and enabling him to have agency to create within the space. For A/R/Tographers such as Mike and Evan I tailored my pedagogy to ensure that I worked alongside them. I intuitively learnt when to talk and when to listen (hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010), reading both verbal and non-verbal cues to create a supportive learning environment in order that he may feel comfortable within the space (Miller, 2010). For others such as Lenny, Jake and Alice, I actively listened to their narratives, reciprocating with my own stories whilst making. This data supports

the hypothesis that I was responding to the needs of the individual, rather than conforming to conditions set by the environment (Dewey, 1938). Therefore the traditional role of teacher was challenged and reinvented when power lies within the environment aligning with the research of Adams and Owens (2016).

As suggested by the research of Bourdieu (2010), the findings suggest that I draw on my lived experiences as a mother to understand and adapt to the behaviours of the A/R/Tographers. This is exemplified when observing Mikey's creative process, which prompted me to recall memories of my youngest son playing at nursery. I observed Mikey and Jake, intuitively acknowledging and using my experiences to respond to their individual needs. For Mikey, I gave him my time and full attention, helping with his creations whilst listening inhabiting a maternal role. In alignment with the research of Greenfell (2008), I used my understanding of my own habitus as a sociological lens to understand and meet the needs of individuals within the group. Therefore my identity is a combination of life experiences married with my professional identity as an artist teacher. Drawing on my plethora of experiences was integral in my development within my role of facilitator in A/R/Tography. I employed an intuitive element to the role, which was evidenced through the teaching approach used with Evan when assisting to construct his felt handbag. hooks (2010) suggests the need for progressive holistic education encompassing mutual participation and A/R/Tography afforded me the opportunity to implement such a model of learning. One of the issues arising from this study is that if there is a need for progressive holistic education, there is also the need for progressive holistic educators. I did not want to be perceived as a traditional educator and the findings suggest that the A/R/Tographers did not wish me to inhabit such a role. The role I occupied within the space metamorphosed as I acknowledged the emotional presence and needs of each individual (hooks, 2003). This aligns with the research of (Uitto, 2012 & Van Manen & Li, 2002) who emphasise the importance of

teachers creating personal relationships with their students in order to acknowledge individuality and the whole being of students.

Examples of these personal relationships are evidenced in the way that Jake addressed me with an, “Alright Bennett!” and his playful use of body language. The way that I bestowed the nickname, *Speedy Gonzales* on Mikey was a term of endearment, but also an observation of his working practice through working alongside him in the social space (Leslie & Skipper, 1990). Other A/R/Tographers would use me as a confidant, talking to me about a wide range of issues. This was exemplified in A/R/Tography when Tim disclosed, “I think I am bad at art but I really like to do it! I was told in primary school I was not a very good artist and I have spent my whole life trying to prove everyone wrong.” Lenny also used me as a confidant when showing me the text, “...All my friends are cool about this. From now on could you please call me Ashley.” This was a privileged space for me to inhabit. I had the trust of the A/R/Tographers and they had mine, aligning with the theories of hooks (2003) and Jeffs and Smith (2005). This supports the theories of Dash (2006b) who suggests that it is the role of the teacher to celebrate difference and nurture the same. This research suggests that within the A/R/Tography space there was the blurring of boundaries between teacher and student and it was necessary for me to continually re-negotiate the boundaries between my teaching persona and arts facilitator (Uitto, 2012). I had moved out of the hierarchal sphere of teacher and inhabited a holistic role incorporating many facets of my identity both personal and professional.

Chapter Six Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore making and relational creativity and relationships arising through creative practices in informal making spaces. The aims of this study sought to answer the questions:

- What impact do informal making spaces have on teachers' professional relationships with students?
- What impact do informal making spaces have on student relationships?
- What are the implications of informal making spaces for the school curriculum in England?

The research questions are embedded in and arise from the phenomena that occurred within the A/R/Tography space and I believe this thesis provides a reflective and authentic understanding of the nature of providing democratic making spaces within a secondary school setting. It provides a story that documents the establishment of the A/R/Tography Collective addressing my experiences of letting go of traditional teaching methods; the A/R/Tographers' responses to taking control and agency within the space; followed by a comprehensive account of experiences of making, relational creativity and the relationships within the democratic framework; moving to explore particular A/R/Tographers' experiences of the art work at Tate Exchange, Liverpool and concluding with an examination of both my own and A/R/Tographer responses to the conclusion of the research project.

The results of this study indicate the need for students to have an informal making space outside of the curriculum framework, aligning with the theories of Room 13 and Reggio Emilio models of learning. This demonstrates that the current art curriculum is not meeting the holistic

needs of students within the classroom. It lays bare the lack of freedom the art curriculum framework affords young people to explore agency and self-actualisation through the process of making, indicative of the dominance of neoliberalism embraced by many Western governments' educational policies (Adams & Owens, 2016). Although a child's right to education and freedom of expression is recognised as a fundamental right (UNCRC, 1990 p.8), the research suggests the holistic needs of the students are not being addressed, or met within arts education.

One of the most significant findings of the study is the commonality found between myself and the A/R/Tographers, in our collective desire to challenge the traditional confines of the curriculum. This is particularly evident in my role as arts facilitator, assisting the A/R/Tographers reveal their self-generated art through contemporary art practices (Adams, 2005). The results indicate that in order to counteract the dominance of neoliberalism, it was important for myself and the A/R/Tographers to assert our fundamental rights of democracy and freedom within the informal making space. By challenging current pedagogical constraints and creating disruptions, new spaces of learning and possibility were allowed to open up. The research indicates that both the A/R/Tographers and I shared the commonality of developing disobedient tendencies within the A/R/Tography space to fracture the, "parameters of instruction and pedagogic work (Atkinson, 2018 p.147). The implications that can be drawn from the research, is that the current national art and design curriculum in England is failing to allow students freedom of choice to explore art making practices within curriculum time. It is fundamental to the working of democratic education that students are given the time to reflect and resist traditional school orthodoxies through contemporary art practices (Adams, 2005). The democratic learning space worked in direct contravention to the neoliberal model of education, allowing self-generated art to be revealed which in turn, opened up spaces of social engagement and "radical possibility" (hooks, 2010 p.12). However

the need for democratic learning spaces to exist within the culture of the secondary school is problematic, as contemporary, process-based art practices are not always quantifiable in terms of academic value. This acts in direct contravention to the performativity culture of the secondary school setting, which is driven by the dominance of neoliberalistic tendencies (Adams & Owens, 2016). Therefore these findings indicate that there is a lack of freedom and democracy within the art and design curriculum, and the rights of the learner have been placed secondary to pupil progress (Adams, 2012).

The evidence gathered through the narrative process, has allowed close examination of how relationships between myself and the A/R/Tographers developed and altered, providing a unique insight into the lives of the young people involved. The results of this study indicate that the A/R/Tographers' gained individual and collective empowerment through the process of making and talking, demonstrating the ability to self-govern without any the need for an imposed system in place facilitating individual and collective agency. By employing this approach within educational settings, relationships between individuals are developed and strengthened. However this stands in opposition to current Western government educational policies, where competitiveness and target driven outcomes do not allow for individual and collective agency. This implies that in order for art and design to meet the creative and holistic needs of young people, current art educational policy needs to be reviewed. This research suggests that art educators need to challenge traditional hierarchal roles and trust in students abilities to self-govern. Art educators need to work alongside students acknowledging their "whole being" (Wilson, 2003), to facilitate individual and collective empowerment and ways of expressing the same through the art of communication in all its forms. One of the most significant findings in the study is that both myself and the A/R/Tographers, wanted to reveal more of our personal identities within the space (Uitto, 2012). The research demonstrates that it is

possible for art educators to be seen as a whole person whilst negotiating professional boundaries. As the A/R/Tographers lived experiences were revealed to me through A/R/Tography, I was able to respond with care and concern (hooks 2003). It was also established that it is possible to prioritise individual needs and respond to, "...the specific rhythms of each learner's practice" (Atkinson, 2018 p.203). By incorporating these elements into my own pedagogical identity, Student teacher relationships are not an aside to the teaching, but form an integral part of the learner experience and the foundations for democratic learning. The research suggests that positive relationships between students and teachers are reinforced and strengthened through making and talking, indicative of the benefit of introducing such practices within curriculum time. This would not only enhance learner experience of the subject, but allow educators to have more background knowledge of students as individuals in order that they may tailor and adapt their pedagogical practices accordingly.

My work supports and adds to the work of hooks who, argues for educators to inhabit more of a holistic role. There is a need to acknowledge the emotional presence and wholeness of students, listening and hearing individual voices (hooks, 2003 p.129). Additionally, there is a need on the students' part to be seen and heard as individuals. The research highlights the necessity for art educators to meet the needs of the young people they educate not just through teaching them a prescribed curriculum, but meeting their emotional needs through fostering nurturing relationships (Miller, 2005; hooks 2010). I believe that my work has contributed to the evidence, which supports the argument that instead of enforcing the curriculum on students, there is a need for educators to respond to their individual and collective needs on a more holistic level (Atkinson, 2018). The data highlights the need for progressive holistic teaching and educators to fill that role (hooks, 2003; Jeffs and Smith, 2005). I am of the belief that my work has contributed to current empirical evidence by highlighting

the need for informal making spaces to disrupt preconceived notions of art education, and open up new possibilities for practice and ways of understanding (Bourriaud 2002; Atkinson, 2018). The space allowed the concealed, self-generated art of the A/R/Tographers to become visible to both myself and other members of the group. This demonstrates the need for freedom and space to create and showcase this 'self-generated art' (Wilson, 2003). My study demonstrates how as an art educator my pedagogy was lacking and I was not meeting the needs of students within the curriculum. As an artist teacher, I needed to re-think my teaching strategies, incorporating and introducing the cultural referents of students within my own pedagogy; to help highlight the relevance of the subject not just within school, but the wider picture of education (Wilson, 2003). The research suggests that if an educator is to be successful within a democratic learning space, their identity needs not only to be revealed, but to continually metamorphosize drawing on a plethora of experiences to meet the needs of each individual through holistic teaching.

The recommendations in this a/r/tographic thesis are problematic, but not wholly unmanageable within the current art curriculum. By allowing students freedom of expression within curriculum time for as little as an hour a week, relationships between educator and student would have the chance to develop and strengthen. This in turn would allow students the space to reveal their inner worlds, and through the art of communication, relationships between educator and student would be nurtured. By establishing positive relationships with the emphasis directed away from performativity, in my experience it becomes easier to direct and facilitate learning within curriculum time and respond to and meet the needs of each individuals practice. Therefore making the subject more meaningful and relevant to students lives. The evidence presented in this study leads me to conclude, this would autonomously positively impact on the performance of students within curriculum

time, which in turn, may go some way to satisfying the demands of the performativity culture of the school (Adams & Owens 2016).

At the commencement of this thesis I quoted the words of Palmer and observed that his vision of education was an idea central to my pedagogy but did not feel was the reality of the art education I was offering students. There are no easy solutions to any of the issues raised within this study. Indeed such is the nature of research that more questions are presented than answers. However, by working alongside the individuals within the A/R/Tography space, I have been given glimpses of what democratic art education could and arguably should look like within the cultural institution of a secondary school. I would assert that it is possible to educate through the holistic lens of “...Care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust” (hooks, p.131) to enhance learner experience both inside and outside of the curriculum framework. Working alongside the A/R/Tographers has been testament to this, and reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of art education.

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